■ News / A9
Husband and wife fail lifestyle check, are dismissed

■ Business / B1
Trade gap hits $1.2B as imports rise

■ World / A13
4,000 corrupt Chinese officials absconded with $50B

■ Metro
14 Manila courts have had no judges for last 6 years

Reyes orders new probe into Jaworski-Yap 'shootout' case

■ Entertainment
Robin's talent fees to go to painting of mosques in Taguig

Aguirre twin treated for infection, fluid in skull

CEBU: Aguirre, one of the formerly conjoined twins from Aloy, Negros Occidental, was treated for fluid in his skull wounds and for a urinary tract infection, officials of the Shriners Medical Center in New York City said yesterday.

Two-year-old Carl underwent a 25-minute "maintenance check" for doctors to get a closer look at how his wounds were healing," an...

PHILIPPINE DAILY
INQUIRER
BALANCED NEWS, FEARLESS VIEWS

Tiniest baby ever now 14-year-old achiever

WASHINGTON—The tiny, 625-baby ever to survive at birth is now a 14-year-old high achiever, according to the doctors who had ushered her...

Yet the doctors feared that Madeline Mantovani a...

e-mail: feedback@inquirer.com.ph | Friday, August 20, 2004 | 64 pages | vol. IV | no. 234 | website: www.inq7.net

EVERY bit (and bit) counts for the medal-starved Philippine team at the Athens Olympics. Harry Tabunoc is proclaimed the winner over Tajikistan's Sharaf Dauzior during the light flyweight boxing preliminaries on Wednesday.

New defense secretary under siege

Pimentel: Appointment like bolt out of the blue

GMA: They must agree with me

By Julee Laleng Javellana and Alexis Pace

THE NEW defense secretary cautions understand why his appointment appears to be the most controversial among the new members of the Cabinet.

"I don't think I'm the most controversial (appointee). I'm just the logical consequence of the circumstances of the Jurists and Solicitors Commission that a civilian—someone who does not come from the military—should head the Department of National Defense," Avelino "Nonong" Cruz Jr. of "The Final" yesterday said in a phone interview with the Inquirer.

President Macapagal-Arroyo herself was forced to come to the defense of Cruz, a top lawyer who once served as her chief legal counsel and who has no experience with the military.

"I want a civilian to head the DND," the former said in Cebu City.

Opposition Sen. Aquilino Pimentel Jr. said some opposition figures like Avelino "Nonong" Cruz and former Deputy Speaker Raul Gonzalez, who was named justice secretary, could be questioned.

"Nonong for example is like a bolt coming out from the blue," Pimentel said. "It's not usual that we need to find out what makes the President and Nonong think that he is fit for the position."

As for Gonzalez, he said the former Bohol representative "would have strong questions to answer because of his member political bias in DOJ," the former said in Cebu City.

By Juliet C. Rubrico, Bee Isabel Perez and Julee Laleng Javellana

CEBU CITY—Aside from being "best suited" for the job, the former has to their keen to agree with her.

Pressed on Macapagal-Arroyo explained to reporters the standards she guided her in choosing members of her official family, and denied that political indebtedness was a consideration.

"The programs that the Cabinet secretaries will implement are our programs. They must agree with me, they must be an extension of me. I could have a Cabinet member whom I will be arguing with all the time," she said Wednesday night at an informal press conference at Malacañang in Cebu, the Palace in the South.

Pinoy boxer whips Tajik, gives RP reason to hope

By Antonio T. Eugenio Jr.
News Editor

ATHENS—Light flyweight Harry Tabunoc overcame a jittery start and a tenacious opponent as he outpunched his way in the next round of the boxing competitions on Wednesday night, keeping the Philippines' flickering medal hopes alive in the 2004 Olympic Games here.

The former and lightest of the four Filipino boxers entered here awaited the fourth and final round to subdue Sharaf Dauzior of Tajikistan on points at the Peristeri Olympic Boxing Hall and give the Philippines reason to be hopeful going into the second week of the competitions.

He also had to overcome his jitters in his Olympic debut, edging out a 17-12 decision two days before his 23rd birthday.

"Sumobra ako (I felt different)," a visibly relieved Tabunoc told Filipino officials after the fight. He was smiling broadly and jumping up and down in child-like exuberance as he refused how he had trouble hitting a quick, moving target.

"It's a big bout. It has a psychological effect on the whole Philippine team, especially in taekwondo," said boxing hero and former Manila Mayor Bill Lacson.

Pinoy Filipinos will be representing four medal hopes in taekwondo when action starts Aug. 26 at the Faliro Pavilion.

Tabunoc Go kicks off taekwondo action for the Filipinos in the roster on 65 division on Aug. 26. On Aug. 28, Mary Antoinette Rivera fights in the women's under-67 kg class and Donald Geisler III competes in the under-80 kg category.

Cabinet revamp called a 'rigodon'

By Michael Lim Ubac
Cynthia D. Balana
and Elizabeth L. Sarabia, Business

A MODE rigodon (musical chairs). Some dogs with new collars. Payback time.

These were some of the reactions to Malacañang's announcement of the "partial list" of 33 appointees to the Cabinet and other top government posts.

Bank analysts noted that Malacañang did not include key economic posts, which investors say have an impact on the country's budget deficit, interest rates and investments.

The stomach hood of a brokerage firm said the market was looking for changes in the finance, budget and treasury departments and the bureaus of internal revenue and customs.

"In this sense, is Cabinet revamp] didn't matter much to the market," the research head, who asked not to be named, said.

Sen. Richard Gordon described the appointments as more of a "rigodon" than a revamp.

21 ON 21

Convicted soldier tags close Aquino relative

A BAGANI artist breathes up his Ninoy Aquino portrait as it is that time of year again when the nation honors its martyr's dea...

By Philip C. Tubeza
Marjorie C. Ortiz
and Jo Clemente,
PDI Central Luzon Desk

ON THE EVE of the 21st anniversary of Sen. Benigno "Ninoy" Aquino Jr.'s assassination, one of the convicted soldiers said that a "close relative" of Ninoy's President Corazon Aquino had masterminded the cold-blooded murder.

In a four-page affidavit, former Maj. Felix Martinez said that the ball pay Rolando Galman and two other men involved in the killing were "men of a close relative of ex-President Cory Aquino."

"I will name his name in the proper forum," Martinez said.

Cedar Rep. Benigno "Benoyo" Aquino III was quick to rule out the involvement of his uncle, businessman Eduardo "Danding" Cojuangco Jr., in the assassination of his father.

Cojuangco, who heads San Miguel Corp. (SMC), was said to be out of the country.

Congressman Aquino reiterat...

REPORTING for duty, Malacañang President Ms. Arroyo returns the salutes of the captives freed by the NPA, Army 1/Lt. Rodolfo Fidalgo (left) and Private First Class Raoul Manalastas who stood with her in the Palace of the South in Cebu City on Wednesday night. Also in photo is Lois, Fidalgo's wife. (At left) Clean-shaven and in uniform, Fidalgo and Manalastas arrive for a news conference in Manila.

Bicol village 'shocked and awed'

By Joyce Pangilinan
PDI Southern Luzon Bureau

"MAY SUGOD!"

The village children are common cure cry and thought it was a movie now saying up to a location shoot.

When they arrived? A news photographer said it was closer to "shocked and awed."

Barangay Poblacion in Pamplona, Camarines Sur, is a remote coastal village that had rarely seen anything like it—a press armada. Until Wednesday, when over 30 vehicles bearing local and national media people rolled in at about 4 p.m.

The village sprung up. Intrigued residents hounded one of two buses and followed the convoy, which stopped at a coconut portion of the main road in Hacienda Maria.

WEATHER FORECAST

Nene said to be quitting as Senate minority leader

By Christine O. Avendaño
and Michael Lim Ubac

SEN. Aquilino "Nene" Pimentel Jr. is considering resigning as Senate minority leader after he vented with the majority on the proposed amendment to the legislative calendar of the 12th Congress.

This was disclosed yesterday by a minority member who said the group was set to meet on Monday to discuss Pimentel's proposed resignation.

The Senate approved the other night the proposal to have the interpolated measures run from July 26 to Sept. 24, adjourning for a month. Sessions would then resume on Oct. 27 and then adjourn again on Dec. 17 for the holiday break.

A debate between the majority and the minority erupted when opposition Senators Sergio Osmeña and Juan Ponce Enrile opposed the proposed schedule.

In the end, Pimentel stood with the 12 senators in the majority to approve the measure.

Except for Sen. Edgardo Angara, who was absent on Wednesday, the remaining seven minority senators voted against the proposal.

Pimentel refused to confirm reports of his resignation as the leader of the minority bloc "until we discuss the issue."

"I don't intend to vacillating linen in public," Pimentel told reporters.

Pimentel said all he wanted was for the "calendar to be defined so that we can move on."

"The activities of Congress depend on the calendar," he said.

The minority source said some members of the blue-dalton Master Pimentel for what he did at the latter did take up with them the proposal to amend the calendar during a caucus last Monday.

During the meeting, Pimentel told the members that he had accepted to behalf of the minority the proposed amendment to the calendar.

The source said that he opposed the proposal because he wanted long weathing hours.

The matter was not resolved as the session was about to begin and the meeting had to end, the source said.

Senate President Franklin Drilon said he had received the report of Pimentel's plans to resign as minority leader. It was a "matter for the minority to decide," he said.

Through sheer force of numbers, the ruling bloc voted 13 to 7 on Wednesday night to pass the proposed congressional calendar.

Pimentel supported the majority since it was a slight modification of his proposed calendar, which more or less had eight months of work and a one-month break in between every two months.

The issue on whether to extend the Senate break from two to four weeks threw the chamber into a heated debate, which somewhat stopped the pursuits of neophyte Sen. Manuel "Lito" Lapid.

Lapid stood up and denounced the disharmony in the Senate, he said the minority who were against extending the break should not take it against the majority members if they insisted on the longer break.

PAINFUL HOMECOMING

Rep. Ignacio Arroyo (Kampi, Negros Occidental) pushes the wheelchair of overseas Filipino worker Lisa Gerolin, 22, who returned to the country yesterday from Kuwait. Gerolin, shown with her daughter Rachel, escaped from her employer who maltreated her and did not pay her salary.

Kampi mulls crossing over to minority

By Carlos Pitao

THE POLITICAL of President Macapagal-Arroyo is thinking of going opposition in the House of Representatives, using the maverick stance of former Vice President Teofisto Guingona as a model.

The Kabalikat ng Malayang Pilipino (Kampi) caucus that made this announcement after it was booted out of the ruling coalition in the House led by the dominant Lakas-Christian Muslim Democrats of Speaker Jose de Venecia Jr.

"If they (the majority coalition) don't want us, what can we do?" the Kampi president, Rep. Bonifacio Posos (Aurora), said in a phone interview.

"It's either you're with the majority or the minority. If Lakas has kicked us out of the ruling coalition, then we'll go opposition," Posos said.

Posos said he has already met with the leadership of the minority bloc. Representatives Rolando Zaldivar (PMT San Jose), Jacinto Paras (LDP Negros Oriental) and Rolex Suplico (LDP Iloilo).

"We're studying the option of forging a new alliance with the minority and forming a new minority bloc in the House," Posos said.

Where it was pointed out that Kampi was in somewhat of an identity crisis as Kampi's chair was no less than President Macapagal-Arroyo herself, Posos said: "Our case belong to an administration party and yet be in the minority. There is no inconsistency."

Posos cited the case of Guingona who for most of his stint as the country's second highest official was at odds with the Presidents. Guingona was at one time the Senate minority leader while belonging to the ruling Lakas-CMD.

How long will Aglipay serve?

By Christian F. Figueroa

THE APPOINTMENT of Deputy Director Ernesto Edgar Aglipay as Philippine National Police chief has triggered another round of second guessing in the force.

The question uppermost in people's minds is how long Aglipay, whose mandatory retirement falls exactly 24 days from today, would stay in the post.

According to a police general, Aglipay himself had said that he would stay in the post until December, giving way to Deputy Director General Wilfredo Gil, the officer top contender to replace outgoing PNP chief Hermogenes Ebdane who has been appointed National Security Adviser.

Weeks before his appointment, Aglipay had told the Inquirer that a term of "four to six months" would be enough for him to implement "important reforms" in the 115,000-strong organization.

"I also want to give others a chance. I just want to put in place some programs which I believe will lay the foundation for a much better organization and for succeeding PNP chiefs to follow," he said.

But even if Aglipay were to step down in less than six months, it is by no means certain that Gil would get the coveted post, another ranking PNP official said.

Gil will reach the mandatory retirement age of 56 in March next year and a December appointment would have him only for three months to serve, the source said. With reports from Luige del Puerto, Lydia B. Saludares and Frank Cimatu, PDI Northern Luzon Bureau

Imee's app't to CA causes uproar

By Carlito Pablo

LEYTE (the divided majority coalition in the House of Representatives, the minority bloc in the lower chamber is also embroiled in factional fighting.

Speaking the language all strong opposition blocs legislators use the designation of Rep. Imee Marcos (ILM, Ilocos Norte) as the lone opposition representative in the 11-member Lower House contingent to the powerful Commission on Appointments.

Nothing personal

The opposition bloc of Representatives Teodoro Zamora (NAP, San Juan) and Jocelyn Forte (LDP, Negros Occidental) move to bar Marcos' election to the CA by Minority Leader Francis Escudero (NPC, Sorsogon).

"There's nothing personal here. This is purely a constitutional issue," Zamora said.

Proportional

Zamora noted that the Constitution mandates that the appointment of members to the CA should be in proportion to the number of members of a political party in the Congress.

Marcos, the daughter of the late ex-dictator Ferdinand Marcos, is the lone representative of the Kilusang Bagong Lipunan party in the House and should not be entitled to a CA seat, Zamora said.

Forte said that his party, the Lakas ng Demokratikong Pilipino, has 13 members in the House and should be entitled to represent the opposition in the CA.

Escudero's nomination of Marcos was a clear indication of the "unholy alliance" between him and the majority, said Rep. Rodolfo Biazon (LDP, Cavite).

"The majority has the minority leader in its pocket," Biazon said.

Endorsed by 23

If Zamora, Forte and Biazon insist Escudero to withdraw Marcos' nomination, which had been approved by the House, Escudero says not about to oblige them.

Escudero said Marcos' nomination was endorsed by 23 members of the opposition bloc of 31 members.

"I can't withdraw it. The majority also voted for hers," he said.

Escudero also lashed out at members of the opposition bloc in the House but did not mention anyone by name.

He ain't cowering

"The problem is that they want to dictate everything," he said.

In a statement, Marcos said she was elected through a "vested democratic process."

"I did not invite anybody's person get the support of another low congressman in the opposition. We should be happy we are all here represented," she said.

Big 3 oil firms hike prices by P30/liter

By Abigail L. Ho

THE COUNTRY'S top three oil players Petron Corp., Pilipinas Shell Petroleum Corp. and Caltex Philippines Inc. finally succumbed to high world oil prices, jacking up the prices of their gasoline, diesel and kerosene by 30 centavos a liter.

Caltex's increase took effect Wednesday at 12:01 a.m. while those of Shell and Petron took effect at 12:01 a.m. yesterday.

Shell general manager for external affairs Roberto Ravanzo said fuel pump prices were forced to rise in light of international prices that eat into us.

"We have to cope to some with the reality that fuel pump prices will remain high as long as world crude prices are high," Ravanzo said in a telephone interview yesterday.

The benchmark Dubai crude, which oil refiners Shell and Petron use to price their products, breached the $60-a-barrel mark Wednesday, closing at $60.27 a barrel.

This price surge pushed the avg. 1-M average to $59.64 a barrel, only 36 US cents shy of the $60-a-barrel mark. The July Dated crude average was placed at $54.05 a barrel.

A1 PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER FRIDAY AUGUST 13, 2004

Despite Aussie rancor, its navy to train in RP

By Alexis Pagsa

DESPITE Australia's recent tirades against the Philippines over the latter's pullout of its troops from Iraq, the two countries are holding a joint naval training exercise until the end of the month.

Dubbed "Philsimex-Australian Lantsa 2004," the Philippine Navy and the Royal Australian Navy are conducting the exercise off the eastern coast of Palawan under the rubrik Kilusang-yaya Kubin.

A statement released by the Philippine Navy said the joint exercise "aims to enhance interoperability readiness of the two navies in combined naval operations."

The Philippine Navy Forces are led by Capt. Fernando Rodrigues, commander of Naval Task Force 41, who also serves as exercise director. The forces are composed of a BRP ship, an LST, and 3 boats from the Naval Special Warfare Unit 4, a navy patrol wing aircraft and two ships, namely, the BRP Rizal and the BRP Bacolod City.

The Australian Navy, on the other hand, has brought along two ships, the HMAS Balikpapan and the HMAS Geraldton.

The exercises has five phases but to boats only a maritime surveillance exercise.

The first phase was the preparation phase which began on Aug. 1-8.

The second phase was the surveil phase which started yesterday. This included the arrival of the vessels, courtesy calls and reception for the crews.

The exercise comes a month after the Australian government reiterated bluntly its strongly pushing its troops out of Iraq to save the life of Filipino truck driver Angelo de la Cruz who was threatened with beheading by Islamic militants.

The Philippines filed a diplomatic protest after Australian Foreign Minister Alexander Downer said Manila had acted like a "loaded mallow" by withdrawing its forces. With AFP

Pinay dies in N Zealand storm

WELLINGTON, New Zealand—Police found the body of a missing Filipino woman Thursday, the only bright of a violent one to that dumped heavy snow and torrential rain over a west New Zealand mountain area.

The lack of patrol worker Glinda Pantiguan, 46, who disappeared as she drove to work before dawn on Wednesday, was found in a flooded stream near the rural town of Inglewood in Whitcoupa and police Senior Sgt. Stewart Bain.

Bain said the was outskirts of her ordinary car, which was found in only were open, suggesting Pantiguan had scrambled clear of the vehicle but was caught in the floodwaters before she could reach safety.

Winds that reached 180 mph earlier this week closed Thursday, downing transport services in and out of the capital, Wellington, economy.

At the height of the storm, trains, bus's services and flights were halted, stranding some 9,000 travelers. Several highways were blocked by landslides, floodwaters and heavy snow.

The huts regions of Manawatu and Whanganui to the South of the capital were inundated by thunderstorm overnight Wednesday for the second time in six months.

Police said one house was washed from its foundations after a hillside landslip knocked it part-way down the hill. The occupant escaped unharmed. AP

Corrections

IN YESTERDAY'S issue, the front-page feature story accounted the new Philippine ambassador to Belgium. The newly-appointed ambassador is Lilia Bautista—not Lilia de Lima.

IN THE BUSINESS section of yesterday's issue, the caption of a photo on Page 2B mistakenly that Hilary Jane Ortega was the mayor of San Fernando, Pampanga. Ortega is the mayor of San Fernando City in La Union.

Readers may send their requests for correction of factual errors in writing to Gerry Lirio, city editor, Philippine Daily Inquirer, #32 Mapalad, Diliman, Quezon City, fax them to 897-8783, e-mail address gerry.lirio@inquirer.com.ph, and the desks@inquirer.com.ph.

Complaints about lack of fairness or impartiality in news reports, violations of journalistic ethics, or other matters that readers may want to bring to the attention of the publication should be addressed to Letty Jimenez-Magsanoc, editor in chief, at the same address and fax numbers as those of the city editor, and e-mail address ljmenez@inquirer.com.ph.

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Fast Facts

- SCORE of Jawoski and Yap families to document on June 21, 2004 allegedly over uncollected bets
- Charges leveled by Mandaluyong Prosecutors' Office on Aug. 17
- Interior Secretary Angelo Reyes orders reinvestigation on Aug. 18

Jawo-Yap case not over

By Nelson S. Flores, Luige del Puerto and Christian V. Esguerra

CONCERNED with the growing disturbances of the public with facts in midtown, Interior Secretary Angelo Reyes yesterday ordered a reinvestigation of the Jawoski-Yap shooting incident that took place in Mandaluyong City last June.

Government prosecutors early this week dismissed criminal charges against the scions of the two wealthy families because of alleged inadequacies in the police investigation.

"Unless there is a clear resolution of this high-profile case, confidence in the Philippine National Police, the judicial system and the capacity of the government to deliver justice would be further eroded," Reyes said in a meeting with the business editors and reporters on Wednesday.

At the same time, Reyes encouraged witnesses to come out. He also asked investigators to do their job without fear of retaliation, adding that they would be protected and given full backing by his office.

The Philippine National Police, on the other hand, said it was still looking for new witnesses and evidence.

"The investigation continues," Chief Supt. Joel Goltiao, PNP spokesperson, told reporters. "But there should be new evidence and witnesses."

Acting Justice Secretary Rhi Merceditas Gutierrez yesterday blamed sloppy police work for the dismissal by the Mandaluyong City Prosecutor's Office of slayer and acquittal, illegal discharge of firearms, and malicious mischief charges filed by the police in June against Ryan and Ron Michael Jawoski, Hilton and Wade Yap, and several John Does.

Gutierrez said the police should present more convincing evidence if the charges were to be appealed before her office.

The respondents were accused of scoring on area behind the Jaisuki Restaurant in Gen. Greenhills, Mandaluyong City, into a virtual war zone on the evening of June 21.

The Jawoskis are sons of former senator and basketball legend Robert Jaworski, while the Yaps belong to a prominent Mandaluyong family.

Although police said they could not confirm it, they believe the shootout was sparked by a quarrel over uncollected bets on the results of the National Basketball Association finals amounting to P80,000.

No follow-up

Prosecutor Benito C. Ortuguilla noted in his resolution that the police failed to follow up leads given by witnesses.

Police had concluded that the Yaps and the Jaworskis arrived at Florida Street at around 8 p.m., met in the middle of the street, and traded shots. Police maintained they could not determine who had fired the shots, and which camp had fired first.

"The conclusion of the PNP investigators reportedly does not appear to conform to the evidence on hand, particularly those coming from their informants, who were at the site when the shooting incident happened," Ortuguilla's resolution read.

Ryan Jaworski was the only one wounded in the shootout that also damaged vehicles belonging to Jaworski, Yap and then of PNP spokesperson Senior Supt. Silvestre Bacsasima and Senior Supt. Benjamin Landicho. The two police officials were in the Greenhills area when the shooting occurred. Both the Jaworski and Yap camps insisted they were unarmed.

Police could not establish who had actually fired guns, and none of the witnesses could identify who shot who. The shootout reportedly lasted 10 minutes. At least 82 spent shells were found in the crime scene.

Bacsasima, a police senior, said the security personnel of Bacsasima and Landicho should also be investigated, adding that the latter "know more than what the investigators know."

The two officials, however, said they would no longer pursue the malicious mischief complaint they had filed against Ryan and Hilton since the charges had been dismissed.

"We'll just charge it to experience," Landicho told the inquirer.

Bacsasima said he had already brought his Toyota Revo to the car shop for repair work, and Landicho added that he was inclined to follow Bacsasima's lead.

The dismissal of the case, considered a rare case for wealthy people running afoul of the law, might not have been a surprise for Senior Supt. Hilcon Velasquez, Mandaluyong police chief.

During the investigation in June, Velasquez admitted to the lawyers that the case would just be dismissed unless witnesses surfaced and pointed to the Yaps and Jaworskis as those involved in the shootout.

All the police had in their hands were a couple of video parking attendants who claimed they only saw who the shot were later found to be armed by the Jaworskis and Yaps.

Common effort

"We can always re-open the investigation," said Velasquez. "It has been dismissed, but it does not mean it is over."

He said if new, stronger evidence comes up, or other witnesses volunteer information, the police would refile the charges.

Antigon and antivirus advocates said they were "disgusted" and "enraged" at the turn of events.

"It's the worst way to lose confidence in the government," said Randy Bedrera, a long-time antigon advocate.

Dante Jimenez of the Volunteers Against Crime and Corruption said the dismissal of the charges is not yet the end of the case. It could still be resumed as long as the police could build a stronger case, he said.

The police vigorously defended themselves from accusations of incompetence, and incoherence of a whitewash.

Velasquez said it was the citizenry that failed in the case, not his investigators.

"We did our job. But justice is an endeavor not just of the police, but also of the community," he said. "In this case, no one wanted to help us," he said.

The police said that instead of talking to investigators, the Yaps and the Jaworskis gave interviews to the media. "No one wanted to press charges. Put yourself in our shoes. What could you do?" Velasquez added. With Philip C. Tubeza

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Consumers miss out on water bill refund

THE DAILY GOSPEL

Friday, August 20, 2004
20th Week in Ordinary Time

1st Reading: Ezek 37:1-14
Gospel: Mt 22:34-40

When the Pharisees heard how Jesus had silenced the Sadducees, they came together. One of them, a teacher of the Law, tried to test him with this question. "Teacher, which is the most important commandment in the Law?"

Jesus answered, "You shall love the Lord, your God, with all your heart, with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the first and the most important of the commandments. But after this there is another one very similar to it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. The whole Law and the Prophets are founded on these two commandments."

Commentary:

I mentioned my rediscovery of the prime catechism after many years. No one had tried to educate me on its world knowledge of God, but Jesus' insistence that God was love. We older people grew up with fear, and set prayer that it didn't end on deadly! But nowadays things are the society sensitive people. I don't know the motives of the publishers who revised this eighteen-century stuff to us, perhaps they do have that people are longing for old certitudes in a world of rapid change. That is undoubtedly true, and it's a good thing to get down to basics at such a time. But the basics are the gospels, and not a dated catechism. The word that is true and strengthens us and sets us free is the word of God.

The catechism looked tough and hard edged to someone and it could make folk of love seek work and contentment. But the latter love is first and foremost about hearing God - without it, we don't know what we are talking about when we talk about God. John wrote, "He our who does not love does not know God, for God is love" (1 Jn 4:8). After that, it is about loving our neighbor. It is not a weak and self-indulgent feeling, but a practical way of life.

(Quezon Publications Inc., 8 Mayaan St., UP Village, Diliman, Quezon City, UP PO Box 4, Diliman, 1100 Quezon City. Tel. 921-8444; fax 921-7636. E-mail: ud@skies.org. Website: http://www.bible-claret.org (Claretian Publications Inc.) & http://www.maria.claret.org (Claretians in the Philippines)

By Christine Gaylican

CONSUMERS may have just missed out on a refund in their water bills.

The Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System Regulatory Office (MWSS-RO) has given up on its plan to adopt the recent Supreme Court ruling disallowing corporate income taxes as part of operating expenses.

This would have led to a reduction in the tariff rates set by the two private water concessionaires, Manila Water Co. Inc. and Maynilad Water Services Inc., and resulted in an estimated P1.3 billion refund to water consumers, not unlike the refund the Supreme Court had ordered Manila Electric Co. (Meralco) to make to its customers.

In a board resolution issued last week, the MWSS-RO accepted the arguments that its concessionaires were not "public utilities" but "mere agents of the MWSS."

Manila Water and Maynilad had opposed implementation of the Supreme Court ruling since this would mean a tariff cutback of from P1.00 to P1.50 for a household consuming at least 20 cubic meters a month.

MWSS sources said the cutback would have been in the form of discounts to tariffs to be imposed on the concessionaires' millions of customers.

In separate papers submitted in the MWSS-RO, Manila Water and Maynilad said the regulator had no basis for adopting the Supreme Court ruling.

"The SC decision in the Meralco case concerned a public utility. Our company is not a public utility subject to a rate base but [is] a mere agent and contractor of the MWSS," said Manila Water president Jennifer T. Aquino.

Manila Water also said its business plan approved by the MWSS-RO on Oct. 25, 2003, stated that income tax payments were expenditures.

"The MWSS-Regulatory Office is legally approved the business plans. Our income tax payments are expenditures in accordance with the concession agreement... The concession agreement defined expenditures to include Philippine business taxes of the concessionaire," Manila Water said.

The MWSS-RO refused to make its resolution public and did not want to provide a copy to media. The Inquirer was able to peruse a copy of the resolution which had been posted on its bulletin board.

Comment on 'unbundling' plea, Appeals court orders Sol-Gen

THE COURT of Appeals has directed the Solicitor General's office to submit its comment on a petition from the Energy Regulatory Commission asking the appellate court to reverse its controversial decision nullifying the Manila Electric Co.'s application to increase and unbundle its rates.

In its petition, the ERC claimed that the CA had erroneously told the CA that the regulatory agency did not ask for an audit of Meralco's books before approving the utility's rate application.

The court said it would like the ERC's comment before it acts on the ERC's petition, submitted last Monday, asking the CA to set aside its July ruling annulling the ERC's approval of the Meralco's rate increase application and ordering the Commission on Audit (COA) to audit the books, records and accounts of Meralco.

Arguing through its counsel Encarnita Juan, the ERC said it did order the COA to look into Meralco's records and accounts.

But Juan also argued that under the law, a COA audit was not a prerequisite for the approval of a rate application.

Juan said ERC chair Ma Nieves Confesor, in 2002, had asked the COA to look into Meralco's records and four COA auditors later conducted an audit of the power utility's books. ERC was informed of the results on June 24, 2002.

He said the ERC strictly followed the prescribed procedures before approving the Meralco rate hike petition.

In May 2003, the ERC approved an increase of 0.65 centavos per kilowatt hour in Meralco's distribution rate and 0.33 per kWh in its generation and transmission rate, for a total increase of 17 centavos per kWh. The rates began charging the increased rates in June 2003.

Philip C. Tubeza

Local artists to screen alien acts

FOREIGN artists will soon be required to get the approval of local singers before they are given work permits by the Bureau of Immigration.

A memorandum of agreement to that effect was signed Tuesday by Immigration Commissioner Alipio Fernandez and officers of the Organisasyon ng Pilipinong Mang-aawit (OPM) and the Asosasyon ng Musikerong Pilipino Inc. (AMP) on Tuesday.

The agreement came after local artists complained they were losing income due to the influx of foreign artists into the country.

"This means that, henceforth, we will not approve any application for a work permit if it was not endorsed by the OPM and the AMP," Fernandez said in a statement.

Under the guidelines, OPM and AMP will evaluate the applications for work permits of all producers who intend to bring in foreign entertainers.

After evaluating the nature of the musical event, the OPM and AMP will issue separate endorsements to the BI before the application for work permit is approved. Marvin P. Sy

Quake rocks Bicol region

A MODERATE earthquake hit the Bicol region yesterday afternoon, with the epicenter in Sorsogon, measured at intensity 5 in Virac, Catanduanes.

The 2:33 p.m. temblor was terminated in an eight-second jolt, and is limited, and caused to a movement in an offshore fault line northeast of Catanduanes, according to the Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology. It had a magnitude of 5.8.

No damage

The quake was recorded at intensity 4 in the cities of Legaspi, Iriga, Naga and Sorsogon, intensity 3 in Daet, Camarines Norte, and intensity 2 in Dumaguete, Quezon, Pilipinas added.

No damage or casualties were reported in the area as of early last night.

Shallow

The Philippine Upper Hill Observatory Center in Baguio, Albay, reported that the quake was located at 14.30 degrees north and 124.20 degrees east, 49 km north and three degrees west of Virac town, with 16 km depth of focus, which the agency said was shallow.

Mario Pacinonio of the Catanduanes governor's office said the quake terrified provincial capital employees who rushed outside the provincial Capitol Center, Joyce Mojillano, PIN Southern Luzon Bureau

REMEMBERING QUEZON
Senator and Nacionalista Party president Manuel Villar (center, party) Tuesday) Pro-abor Manuel Quezon along with Quezon City Mayor Sonny Belmonte during rites Thursday celebrating the 136th birth anniversary of the late school executive. (DANNY DOCE)

MANILA COURTROOMS

Wanted: 14 RTC judges

By Tarra V. Quismundo

IN MANILA, many courtrooms seem to lend truth to the perceived anti-poor justice system to the country.

And home to both of the Manila Regional Trial Court (RTC) order the hanging for new judges. 14 to be exact.

The RTC has enough court rooms, but many are vacant, said Clerk of Court Jeanette dela Cruz-Bautista.

Of the city's 36 branches, 14 have been vacant for as long as one years after the judges that occupied them had either been promoted or gone into retirement.

Nine of the courtrooms but three suspensions to retirement, three were promoted to the Court of Appeals, one judge was assigned to an international court of the United Nations, while another judge, the Inspector Living of Branch 50, died in June 2003 due to heart ailment.

The appointment of judges and Supreme Court justices is an executive function of the President, said Bautista.

President Macapagal-Arroyo, who once a fresh member in May, has not shuffled the members of her cabinet. Now, Manila is hoping that she will look their way and give them new judges.

According to Bautista, the Judicial Bar Council has screened many applicants but the Palace for RTC to make any appointments.

Two of the vacant courts, Branch 35 and 36, have been occupied temporary judges, while the 12 others share judges of other Manila courts, hearing the cases left pending when the sales were vacated.

As these courts await new judges, they are not given new load whenever new cases are filed off from a court.

Meanwhile, the time of sitting judges attending to them are quite lonesome cases in dark wood rooms and cases in their adopted courts.

"The judges are overburdened and they have other cases to attend to," said Bautista.

As a result, the 42 functioning courts carry heavy case loads. At Branch 15, a special drugs court where judge was promoted to the CA in April 2002, 69 hearings are scheduled in a day under its serving presiding judge.

"We even held arraignment and pre-trial hearings at the Manila City Jail just so we presiding cases would move. We hope new judges would be appointed soon," said Branch Clerk of Court Nelia Rosete. The court now has 933 pending cases.

Vendors block road to Caloocan school

By Edson C. Tandoc Jr.

FOR SEVERAL days, parents, students and other persons followed on their way to school and church in Bagong Silang, Caloocan City.

Vendors have occupied this unmanned main road leading to the Bagong Silang Elementary School and the Parish of the Immaculate Conception, forcing students, mostly children, to walk, or worse, under the rain, for as far as 500 meters.

But their sacrifice could be over.

Informed of his constituents' plight, Mayor Enrico Echiverri told the barangay councilor that the vendors would be moved to the local market near the school.

Echiverri explained that construction was ongoing at the market to accommodate the vendors from the streets of Bagong Silang so hardly be assigned them to our area. However, the area cannot yet to be the road project can be school and church.

Piles of garbage were also seen in the middle of the street.

The residents even reportedly dumped garbage near the school, because said kitchen's association president Arnilson Bernardo said the barangay.

Bagong Silang Elementary School has 16,000 students.

Supreme Court of the Philippines
Philippine Judicial Academy

PRE-JUDICATURE AND COMPLETE MCLE COMPLIANCE PROGRAM

The Philippine Judicial Academy announces the holding of a Pre-Judicature Program that qualifies its graduates for possible nomination by the Judicial and Bar Council to judicial positions.

Complete participation in the program entitles the participants to fulfillment of MCLE units, and upon favorable endorsement of the Chancellor, cum laude graduates of the Pre-Judicature Program who meet academic standards, fifteen (15) units towards the Master of Laws (LL.M.) degree at the San Beda College Graduate School of Law.

Sessions are held on Friday afternoons from 2:00 P.M. to 9:00 P.M. and Saturdays from 8:00 A.M. to 9:00 P.M. for a period of five (5) weeks, commencing on September 24, 2004 ending on October 23, 2004, at the Training Rooms 1 to 3, Centennial Building, Supreme Court, Manila.

For any inquiries, please call the Philippine Judicial Academy-Supreme Court, telephone numbers: 552-9510/552-9534 Registration forms may be downloaded at the Supreme Court Web Site (www.supremecourt.gov.ph) see announcements.

Transport groups may ask for new fare hike

By Christa S. Robles and Edson C. Tandoc Jr.

TRANSPORT groups said yesterday that they would ask for an additional 75 centavos to P1 on the minimum fare should the price of diesel reach P32 per liter.

Danilo Mariano, president of the Federation of Jeepney Operators and Drivers Associations of the Philippines (Pejodap) and jeepney groups had agreed to file a new fare hike petition before the Land Transportation Franchising and Regulatory Board (LTFRB) should fuel prices continue to rise.

Diesel currently sells from P28.30 to P28.50 per liter.

Discount needed

"We would ask for a 75-centavo increase unless oil companies agree to grant us a discount of at least P5 per liter on diesel," said Mariano.

Pasahero, the country's largest transport group with more than 250,000 members nationwide.

But organizations will also ask for diesel as cost P28 a liter before filing a fare hike petition, revealed Mon Ilagan, president of the City and Provincial Buses Association of the Philippines.

Reached for comment, LTFRB Chair Maria Elena Bautista said that she would meet with transport groups next week to assess any fare hike petition. Bautista is attending a regional transport group meeting in Bali, Indonesia.

"We will build a dialogue with them. We will have to know what they want. It is too early to act on another fare petition," said the LTFRB chief.

Mariano explained that in June, when the P1.50 increase in gasoline took effect, diesel was at P28.10 per liter. He said the price of fuel had gone up by more than P2 per liter since then.

P5.50 minimum

Jeepney's now charge P5.50 for the first 4 km and P1 for each succeeding kilometer. Ordinary buses recommend three fare to P6 on the first 5 km.

Police on the Pinoy-ang Jamalean ng mga Tsuper at Operator Nationwide urged the government to scrap the oil deregulation law and take over the operations of Petron Corp.

The Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries, the members of which control half of the world's oil exports, had been unable to arrest rising prices despite increasing its production.

MetroBriefs

No way for rail link

CALOOCAN City Mayor Enrico Echiverri said he would not allow the construction of the Metro Rail Transit 4 and that Light Rail Transit 4 it would affect the Bonifacio Monument Circle. In short, Echiverri explained that the route from Balintawak to E. Rodriguez Jr. Ave. LRT North Avenue Station could be connected to the EDSA station. Station of the LRT. In a statement, Echiverri said the construction of an underground MRT line along Edsa would kill monuments, and divide the city. Edward C. Tandoc Jr.

Accused vs. accused

PAULINO Mercado, one of the accused in Bombing of John Costello Daily's celebrity-hosted that he had nothing to do with the bombing, was arraigned yesterday before the Manila Prosecutors Office for murder and frustrated murder charges filed against him by Perez. Mercado said Perez allegations could not be given due course as set forth are now charged before the Manila Regional Trial Court." Jaime R. Benitez

Benefit for doc

PALS for P.A.L.S., a benefit concert for Edmundo Diamante, a doctor stricken with amyotrophic lateral sclerosis or ALS, will be held at 7 p.m. Aug. 29, at the Lorma Pavilion Theater in St. Paul's College, Pasay City. Todd Rodriguez, Rivermaya, Dianna, The Company, Dulce, Bing, Juliet Lavilla, The Opera, Tuc, Raoul Seixas, Yeng Constantino and Mayumi Suzuno, Bandadanan and Mica Esguerra will perform. Freddie Santos directs. The show aims to increase awareness about ALS.

Pinoy boxer whips Tajik, gives RP reason to hope

From page A1

Aside from the lackluster performances of Filipino boxers Rey Saludar and Mansueto "Velo" Velasco in their respective bouts, there was another disappointment in the evening session.

Judging from his comfortable victory over Ghana's Ike Quartey Jr. in the 1996 Olympics, the only Filipino entrant in the welterweight division, Roel Velasco, was expected to breeze through his bout against Tajikistan's Bakhtiyor Khamdamov.

But Velasco, who was making his Olympic debut, was clearly overwhelmed by the bigger and more experienced Khamdamov, losing by a unanimous decision, 30-27.

Couple in gov't dismissed after failing lifestyle check

By Armand N. Nocum

FIRST: a first in the government lifestyle check program.

A couple—who both held ranking positions in government—have been ordered dismissed from the service for failing the administration's lifestyle check program.

Ordered fired by President Macapagal-Arroyo were Ismail Arbak and his wife Ganina, regional directors of the Department of Agriculture and the Department of Social Welfare and Development, respectively, in Region XII.

The two were recommended for dismissal by the Presidential Anti-Graft Commission for failing to declare in their joint statement of assets and liabilities (SAL) their ownership of properties in Cotabato City and Maguindanao.

The dismissal order was affirmed by the Palace in a 16-page resolution signed by Assistant Deputy Executive Secretary Waldo Q. Flores in behalf of the President.

"This is a major victory in the sense that a high-ranking and wife-team, high-ranking officials at that, has failed the lifestyle check program started by the President only last week," Palace Chief Counsellor, legal and research director of the PMOC told the hearers.

But Counsellor said the order was not final because the two could file a motion for reconsideration or reinvestigation under the law.

"The resolution dismissing them, therefore, is not yet final and executory," he said.

The Arbak couple were accused of failing to declare in their joint SSGD SAL their acquisition of three properties in 1991, four parcels of land in 1997 and two parcels of land in 1998 and 1999.

To cover up their ownership of the properties, the couple allegedly placed them under the general classification of "apartment" and "housing," without listing their titles and other information.

In their defense, the couple said they placed the properties under such a classification since some of them had been mortgaged to the GSS and the Land Bank of the Philippines.

But the PMOC found the argument "unavailing."

"If the respondents had no intention of misdeclaring the owners concerned in their SAL, they could have easily indicated therein that the apartment had been erected on three parcels of land they owned," the PMOC said.

Tiniest baby ever now 14-year-old achiever

THE WHOLE world hangs with its shiny eyes, cautions a nurse at the Children's Hospital at Montefiore in the Bronx, New York. Shown here is Carl.

Aguirre twin treated for infection

(Story on page A9)

cording to Dr. Jared Strifkerberg, photo surgeon.

Fluid under skin

Strifkerberg said some fluid had developed under the duct flaps that were placed into the boy's skull after the separation surgery. The vein was meningeal skin craniofacial surgical procedures, he added.

Carl and his brother Damien, connected at their heads, were separated during a complicated 17-hour operation on Aug. 4. It was the last in a series of four procedures conducted over 15 months. The twins arrived in New York in August last year.

Montefiore spokesperson Linda McQuaid couldn't yet say how long given medicines for the "mild" urinary tract infection.

Long road ahead

Doctors earlier expressed optimism in the boys' "lightning speed" recovery.

But Strifkerberg said the doctors still needed to keep an close watch. "There is a long road of wound healing ahead." AP

(From page A1)

ure-size baby, saying instead that parents and doctors needed to think carefully about "viewing" extremely small and premature babies.

Madeline was born in 1989 weighing only 280 grams (nine ounces)—less than a can of soda—and was less than 25 cm (10 inches) long. But she developed almost normally, with average mental development, a few eye problems and asthma.

She is short for her age, just 130.5 cm tall (4 3/2 feet tall), but physically normal. She has a 3.7 grade average out of a possible 4.0 and plays the violin, the doctors reported at this week's issue of the New England Journal of Medicine.

"People have got to be very careful how they interpret this," said Dr. Jonathan Muraskas of Loyola University Medical Center in Maywood, Illinois, who helped deliver Madeline.

"People may say 'I had a 972-gram (two-pound) baby that didn't make it.' Muraskas said in a telephone interview—telling parents could be disappointed or even sued.

Madeline was born with better odds than most premature babies, he added.

"I think the take-home point on that boys are vulnerable—not universal more days. She was no dust because her mother had pre-eclampsia, a condition that causes blood pressure to rise enough to restrict the developing fetus of nutrients and threaten the mother's life.

Madeline was delivered by Cesarean section. "In our knowledge, her birth weight record," the lowest in the world literature," Muraskas and colleagues wrote.

Premature girls do better

"We knew that the baby was going to be small but we also knew she was almost 27 weeks," Muraskas said. "Medicine came out crying and she passed on pee, too. But I didn't expect a baby that small."

At nine months, Madeline weighed much less than a normal drink. She spent four months in the hospital, her first month on a ventilator to help her breathe.

Her case were damaged but treatment may have given her perfect vision, according to Muraskas.

At a job, she had a much better chance of survival than a boy for reasons that are not understood. Past research published earlier this month showed that premature boys suffered more brain damage than premature girls.

Her infant size the was reversed by a growing breadth of 9 1/2 inches (Carl, no Gene Jar, his was only

Not miracle workers

"We are not miracle workers," Muraskas said. "The survival rate has stood pretty."

He said parents and hospital workers need advice think about the odds.

"A baby who's born at 23 weeks, that's about the lowest limit of viability that translates to about a one-pound (500 grams) baby. The survival rate is about 5 percent to 10 percent," Muraskas said.

WEIGHING just 1.9 ounces, Madeline Muse is shown after her birth in June 1989.

"The chances of a developmental handicap, like blindness, deafness and cerebral palsy, is at least 50 percent."

Even older premature babies can have severe health problems. "We put head aids on those babies' little problems but we have to step back and ask about the quality of life for little babies?"

Does this make sense?

Dr. Jerold Lucey, the editor of the journal Pediatrics, agreed in a second commentary.

They babies are born and given things, are so incurred violently and much cure violently.

"Does this make sense?" Lucey asked. "We should admit how little we know, explain the present bleak outlook for infant survival."

According to him, parents are now becoming attached to babies doomed to die simply because they can be kept alive for a while in the neonatal intensive care unit. Reuters

EXTRAORDINARY Madeline Muse survived her birth at 23 weeks into her mother's pregnancy to make medical history. She is entering high school next week as an honors student who also plays the violin.

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The WORLD

Editor Luverne B. Gueco

Iraq gov't says offensive against Najaf imminent

NAJAF, Iraq—US tanks tightened their ring around Shiite militia leader Moqtada Sadr's base in a sacred shrine in Najaf Thursday as an Iraqi government minister threatened an offensive against his forces "within hours."

"The Iraqi government has laid down conditions that Moqtada Sadr must promise in a press conference not to return to violence in the future and that the Mehdi Army is to be dissolved," Minister of State Hussein Dacod told a news conference in Najaf.

The fiery cleric must also submit names of all people tried by his religious courts and release all detainees, including Iraqi police, soldiers and national guardsmen, "otherwise the coming hours will be decisive," he added.

"We have been preparing for a military offensive for five days to put an end to this crisis," the minister said.

Intermittent fighting continued Thursday in the historic heart of the holy city, one day after a spokesperson said Sadr had accepted conditions laid down at a national conference, namely to disarm, leave the Imam Ali shrine and join the political process.

"Really actions speak louder than words. We've made our position very clear that he must leave the shrine and dissolve his Army, but still the situation is unchanged," interior ministry spokesperson Sabah Kadhim said.

Confirming on Wednesday that the cleric had "accepted all the conditions extended to him," Sheikh Ahmed al-Shaibani, however, insisted on a ceasefire for the steps to be implemented.

But there was little evidence of that on the ground Thursday as Sadr's Mehdi Army fired at US tanks parked just 200 meters away from the mausoleum, effectively trapping Sadr's men in one of the holiest shrines in Shiite Islam.

"We've had these kind of tricks before and the Iraqi people will not be deceived... If he says he will leave, he should just leave," Kadhim said.

In the United States, national security adviser Condoleezza Rice pressed home the same rhetoric in an interview with CNN television.

"Nobody is taking Sadr at his word. He's someone from whom you have to see action. He said lots of words before. He has never followed through on them.

"I don't think you're going to see an Iraqi government that's going to take his word... He has to be dealt with and I'm quite certain he will be," she said.

A US marine and at least 12 Iraqis were killed during fierce fighting between Sadr's militia and US troops on Wednesday medics and the military said. *AFP*

US intelligence in crisis, says ex-arms inspector

WASHINGTON—Former arms inspector David Kay on Wednesday offered a bleak assessment of the state of US intelligence, saying that even naming an intelligence czar was not likely to fix the problems unless other significant reforms are undertaken.

Kay, who resigned in January as head of the Iraq Survey Group tasked with hunting down Baghdad's alleged weapons of mass destruction program, said the US intelligence network was in a full-blown crisis, and pointed to the Sept. 11, 2001 terror attacks and the flawed intelligence on Iraq's weapons program as evidence.

"The US intelligence community is in a crisis, and this crisis is so grave that it weakens an essential underpinning of both our diplomatic and our national military security capabilities and their ability to support US national interests," Kay said at a hearing of the Senate intelligence committee.

"Remedying this crisis cannot be simply achieved by naming a National Intelligence Director. What is necessary is vision, and an unswerving commitment to serving the nation beyond the political and policy interests of any one particular administration," he said.

He made his remarks at one of nearly two dozen separate congressional hearings to be held in August to review last month's findings by the independent Sept. 11 Commission into intelligence lapses that allowed the attacks to be carried out.

Lawmakers are meeting this month to consider proposals to overhaul the US intelligence system, including the possible creation of a national coordinator of US intelligence. *AFP*

Sony chair urges Japan to open doors to world

CANBERRA—The chair of electronics giant Sony Corp. on Thursday urged the Japanese government to throw open its doors to mass immigration, saying the country's economic prosperity depended on it.

"Globalization, the IT revolution and the rapid aging of society are demanding that the Japanese open up their country to the world and reform their closed and narrow community oriented economic systems," said Iwao Nakatani, who has been a key economic adviser to two Japanese prime ministers.

Japan's falling birth rate threatened to undermine the country's economic base, and would eventually force the government to reverse its conservative immigration policy, Nakatani said in a speech at the Australian National University where he was presented with an honorary doctorate of law.

Japan's birthrate fell to a record low of 1.29 last year, the government said in June, renewing fears about the country's ability to support its graying population in coming decades and sustain its economic prosperity as its labor force shrinks. *AP*

Iran says it may launch preemptive strike against US forces in region

[illegible]—Iranian Defense Minister Ali Shamkhani warned Wednesday that Iran might launch a preemptive strike against US forces in the region to prevent an attack on its nuclear facilities.

"We will not sit in [and] wait for what others will do to us. Some military commanders in Iran are convinced that preventive operations [which the Americans talk about as] are their monopoly," Shamkhani told Al-Jazeera TV when asked if Iran would respond to an American attack on its nuclear facilities.

"Australia is not the only one present in the region. All are also present, even Ghana is in Kandahar in Afghanistan, we are present in the Gulf [and] we can be present in Iraq," said Shamkhani, according to Post in the Arabic-language news channel through an interpreter.

"The US military presence [in Iraq] will not become an element of strength for [Washington] in our opinion. The opposite is true, because their forces would turn into a 'hostage'" in Iranian hands in the event of an attack, he said.

Shamkhani, who was asked about the possibility of an Israeli or US strike against Iran's nuclear power plant in Bushehr, added: "We will consider any strike against our nuclear installations as an attack on Iran as a whole, and we will retaliate with all our strength.

"Where Israel is concerned, we have no doubt that it is an evil entity, and it will not be able to cause [any] calamity anywhere without its American green light. We cannot separate the two." AFP

Aziz to become Palestinian premier

[illegible]—Interim Palestinian Finance Minister Salam Fayyad easily won a seat in parliament, clearing the way for Iran to take over as prime minister next week, officials said on Thursday.

The former [illegible] executive bagged 76,824 votes against 29,483 for his challenger, a Fatah dissident of central Punjab province, where he narrowly survived a suicide bombing on July 30, [illegible] Commission official said.

Six driver and eight others were killed in the attack that officials have linked to Osama bin Laden's al-Qaida network, which is keen on deposing Nawaz Sharif for his support for the US-led war on terror.

Aziz, 55, who Musharraf picked to be prime minister in June after the abrupt resignation of the incumbent, also trounced his opponent in a second by-election in Thatta [illegible] in Sindh province by securing 162,918 votes against the rivals 14,731.

"I will try my best [illegible] to improve the life of country's common man and make efforts to maintain peace and harmony in the country," the official APP news agency quoted him as saying. Aziz's

4,000 corrupt Chinese officials absconded with $50B, say media

BEIJING — About 4,000 corrupt Chinese officials have fled overseas in the past two decades taking a staggering $50 billion with them, official media reported Thursday.

Most of the money has been moved out through offshore financing centers, prompting Premier Wen Jiabao to order finance experts to develop ways to deal with the problem, the Beijing-based Legal News said.

Experts said corrupt officials and some private firms were using companies registered in offshore finance centers such as the British Virgin Islands and the Bahamas to illegally transfer funds.

A joint task force is being set up by the central bank, the State Administration of Foreign Exchange, the China Banking Regulatory Commission and the China Securities Regulatory Commission to deal with the issue.

China is beset by corruption nationwide and it is consistently cited as one of the top causes of public discontent with the current political system.

While the central government has vowed to clamp down hard on the practice, it usually ignores or punishes only a few officials in cases of graft reports in the official media suggest the problem remains severe.

In the latest attempt to combat the problem, China has set up public hotline numbers so that corrupt officials can voluntarily report to how they have pocketed ill-gotten gains for lighter punishment.

Accounts have so far been set up in six provinces and 20 cities, Shallon news agency said Thursday, without naming the places or giving details about how successful the scheme has been.

The move follows a meeting of 70 experts who looked at ways to prevent graft through laws and amendments of current statutes and regulations, said Wang Ming-gao, head of the research group that made the recommendation.

He said the group also proposed regulations to require government officials to report family possessions and set civil torture or bankruptcy penalty laws.

The suggestions are all aimed at preventing corruption systematically rather than by the sporadic punishment of individuals, said Wang. AFP

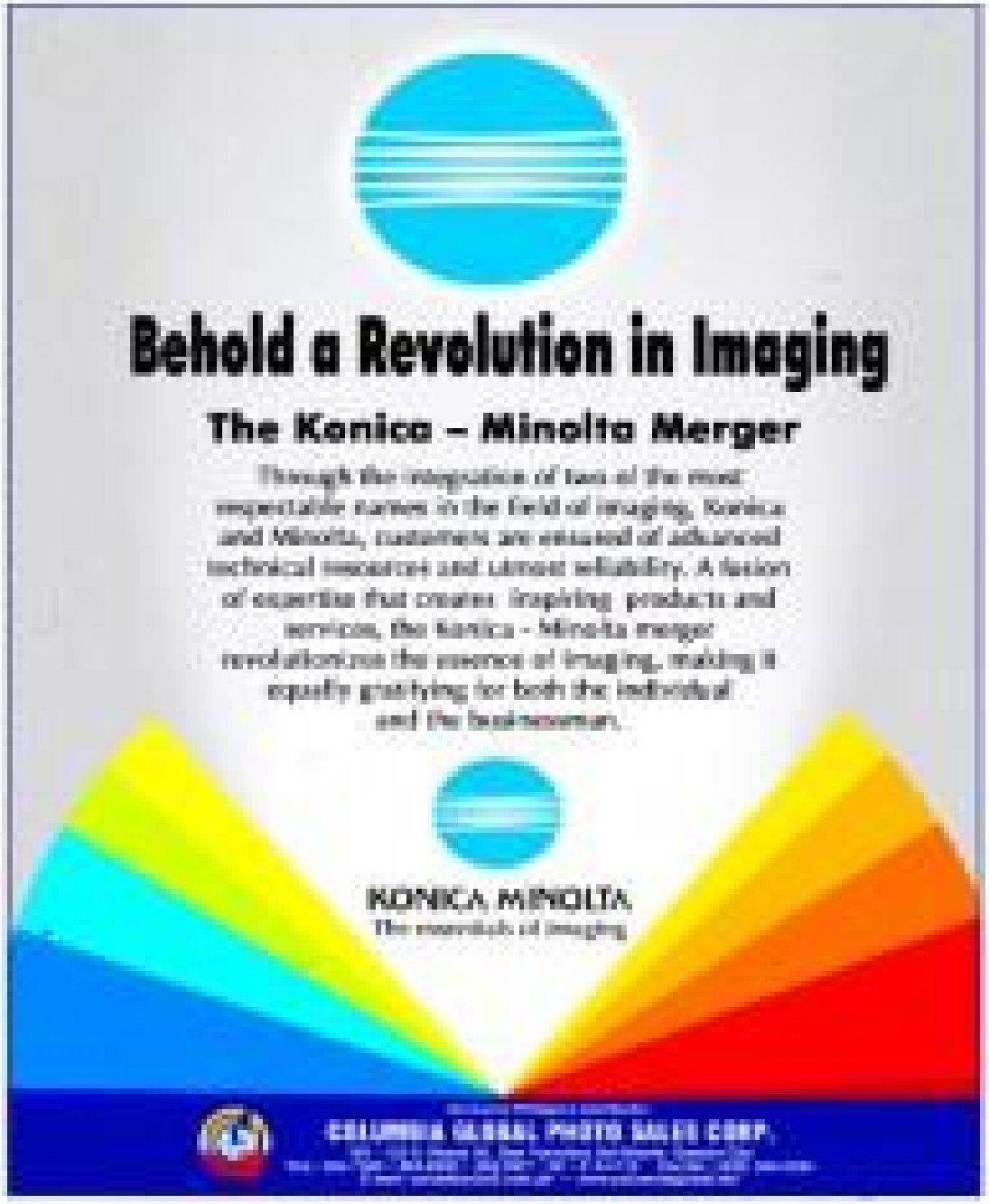
China 'religious persecution' hit

NEW YORK — An American Buddhist group that spent $5 million renovating an 800-year-old temple in rural northern China said on Wednesday that police officers and soldiers took back the temple last week by arresting the spiritual leader and forcibly removing 70 Chinese monks and disciples.

Earlier this month, the police arrested eight underground Roman Catholic priests in a northeastern village after a nighttime house-to-house search, according to an American-based foundation that monitors religious persecution in China.

The two unrelated incidents are the latest examples of what appears to be a government crackdown against some religious groups operating in the countryside. The government allows worship at state-approved institutions, but prohibits "illegal" worship at increasingly popular underground churches.

On Wednesday, officials at the US embassy consulted with leaders of the Buddhist Association of America about the reported takeover of the Great Relic Kingdom temple in Inner Mongolia, an autonomous Chinese region. An embassy spokesperson said that while US officials planned to meet with foreign ministry officials about the matter, New York Times



INQUIRER

OPINION

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Irredeemable

NEW INTERIOR Secretary Angelo Reyes has his work cut out for him. Before everything else, he must straighten up the crooked Philippine National Police. Two recent developments show why this should be foremost in his agenda.

First, the Mandaluyong prosecutor's office has dismissed the criminal charges against Ryan Jovanvil, Ben Michael Jovanvil, Elbert Yap and Mark Yap—all scions of rich families involved in a shootout in Greenhills—for lack of "probable cause." The prosecutor said that the police failed to establish the basic fact that the respondents fired at one another and failed to follow through the leads provided by witnesses.

EDITORIAL

Second, at the other end of the archipelago, in Zamboanga City immigration officials have stopped American Jason Soler, who figured in an accident that killed an official with the rank of undersecretary from fleeing to Malaysia with the assistance of police officers.

What do the two incidents reveal? They tend to confirm the oft-repeated charges that public safety and order is a cause hopeless cause in the Philippines because of the irredeemability of the Philippine National Police (PNP). They show that if the police are not letting criminals get away with their crime through legal means (Jovanvil and Yap case), they let them get away through the back door (the Soler incident). A police force that condones too much in the movie cliché of arriving too late at the scene of the crime, particularly if the victims are the poor, seems too ready and willing to forestall the crime, run, clean up the crime, if those involved are the rich.

In the Jovanvil-Yap case, the sloppy police work that resulted in the dismissal of the case—right on the prosecutor's territorial investigative level—smells suspiciously like a whitewash. Any or all of the cases filed against those who took part in the shootout—felony and homicide, illegal discharge of firearms, and malicious mischief—require standard, promulgated evidence. The shock is that the police couldn't come up with anything!

The respondents didn't seem to have caused public alarm and scandal because, for all intents and purposes, there was no shootout. And if there had been one, the police failed to establish the identities of the perpetrators because they didn't interrogate the shooters. They and they could not because the suspects refused. This is totally egregious because the Commission on Human Rights and the courts are filled with confessions of poor people who had to own crimes forced on them by some politicians who seem to have had acquired training from Hitler's police. But because the suspects carry names of social or economic prominence, it seems the police could not delve on them their methods, even the peremptory and the merely legal.

Stumped on interviewing the suspects, the police could have traced the spent shells and ammunition to the guns and their owners. But lo and behold, they could not for one reason or another. Perhaps their ballistics laboratory had suddenly combed out, and their ballistics experts had retired deeply gone on leave en masse. Perhaps none of the more than 80 bullets fired and recovered on the spot was suddenly available; they may have vanished into thin air! So there was no case of illegal discharge because there was no discharge and there were no firearms!

When the police aren't nurturing criminals out of the court dockets, they are escorting them out of the country. In the Feliz case, those police escorts were Supt. Antonio Gumtiran, Senior Insp. Jeff Reisnes Uy and several others. Their new line: the unstable reputation of tipping boats to subside in a road accident that killed Undersecretary Reyese Peraye and having police escorts helping him out of the mess. The PNP does not even think at restoring somehow crushing justice and responsibility over an incident that killed a Malacañang functionary and a former lawmaker at that (Perez used to be a Manila congressman).

But what is really worrisome is that Gumtiran and his companions are from the Directorate of Operations of Camp Crame. The fact that police officers from the PNP headquarters are aiding criminals on the run should show that rogue cops have penetrated the inner sectors of anti-crime operations. The PNP officialdom has been turned against itself. Reyes must act quickly and forcefully to reverse this trend.

Gov't must first recover looted taxes

AS I SEE IT

Neal H. Cruz

THE GARNET evening was a game of musical chairs. So many people were not moved around. It was the only quick motion at work. Those who helped President Macapagal-Arroyo get re-elected by hook or by crook got the chairs as rewards, like Rep. Art Defensor of Cebu, the anti-extortion security and former Rep. Raul Gonzalez of Iloilo, the new justice secretary.

The President got an unusually high number of votes in Cebu, overtaking all the vote margins of Fernando Poe Jr. in other provinces, which is why she is answering Cebu with all sorts of rewards. She has even made Dodot, Jaworski's home city, a special economic zone for the manufacture of pipes. Jaworski, on the other hand, as the Illinois prosecuting officer of the Iran Hostage Bonds, pointed that out to avoid the punishment and vice presidential commutation of sentence, prevented the opposition from going closer to the electoral count to see to it that the results of the election favored GMA.

GMA must have been so scared of losing, and so exhausted when she won, that she is giving everybody and everything spoils to all those who helped her.

. . .

I think the present winner has so much right to bargain now (since until it has collected the P1.3 billion lost to the tax credit scam and save the government's jobs. To recover need the billions more to save already collected by Bureau of Internal Revenue personnel but deposited in their private bank accounts and later withdrawn. These amounts strong already equal the expected recovery now from the new taxes.

How can we expect people to pay more when taxes already collected are stolen by the tax credit scam? Remember? When recently taxpayers gave with their hard-earned money when the government refunds computers that didn't pay taxes as gift?

Where is the money? Have you seen more than half of 80 tax fraud cases filed dismissed because of the government's failure to prosecute?

I think the first mistake in the process

This operators then turned around and sold them TCCs to big taxpayers by way of companies which they used them to pay their own taxes. The big taxpayers were corporations because the TCCs were initially issued in a 20-percent discount. By using the TCCs, the big taxpayers saved 20 percent on their net payments. Hence the government lost 20 percent in taxes while it still recollected all the taxes due from these big taxpayers.

. . .

In the case of the BIR, the scam was made possible because some army paid to the BIR through banks instead of directly to it. The intention was to prevent BIR personnel from handling the money and stealing them.

But smart operators found another loophole. Because the banks would not send duplicates to remit their collections to the BIR, it gave the operators a window to pull off the same scheme. By the time the money is acknowledged without the cooperation of some bank employees. When a check, payable to the BIR, is paid through the bank, it is deposited in the BIR's account. But the operators have a 10-day grace period credited to the BIR account. Before clearing, the check is diverted to their private account. Also, to where the second issue of bank personnel is needed. After the 10-day period, the account is withdrawn and the account closed. By the time the scam is discovered, the hundreds of millions of pesos in taxes already disappeared.

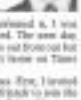
Some BIR employees, but no bank employees, have been charged but after years of trial, only one has been convicted. The trial of the others have been stalled because the accused have disappeared. No doubt they have been provided sizeable bail. So for the millions of pesos in taxes lost, not one penny has been recovered.

With this record, how can the government blame the fake-as-well-because taxpayers to pay more? How can it discourage others from doing the same thing? Instead, it tells them that they can be 100% illegible and get away with it.

Is the Filipino worth repeatedly dying for?

PASSION FOR REASON

Raul C. Pangalangan



TOMORROW we mark the 21st anniversary of the 21st of August 1983 when Ninoy Aquino was murdered upon his return from exile, and by his blood we remember Philippine democracy.

Ninoy was a target in the generation of Filipino students in the 60s. As a student, as jail by the time I entered college, one of eight and one of nine by a whole twelve which had just bartered its freedom for the fake security that surrounded Marcos.

I saw him on TV only once, during the only time he was allowed access to media by the Marcos-controlled press. That was when Boston Ambassador Jaworski had him, with Senator Diokno, for a debate on the Vietnam War, a PPP mission for the Interim Batasang Pambansa, where Ninoy's Lakas pony ran against Jaworski's line-up (which, not surprisingly, lost). It was by an interviewing headliner. I remember the debate, but I remember more of an Jaworski with Ninoy yet all of us cheering each time he scored, like partial every likely every dialogue done some on the offensive, obviously having the time of his life. And I was famous that he had been imprisoned for six years by the time I saw him. I remember that the interviewer was actually a prisoner and that his interviewers were there at his jailer's bidding. Ninoy seemed to be having too much fun, his quite unbroken by long stretches of solitary confinement and the constant threat of death by firing squad.

Ninoy was more than just a stranger to the man in the mirror of that time. He was in fact pictured as part of the political duty just completed: out of power and wanting for his turn at the till. Behind the campaign lies to how was fabricated about his cousin, the Philippine Girl, began in her cause our with a wrinkling accompaniment, observed most by Ninoy's kinsfolk, but which awkwardly came out the day after the murder. Which only showed how close Ninoy and his critics were on top of much with the boom of the Filipino.

I was surprised by my own response to Ninoy's death. At first I refused to believe the story of the ten revolt-fraud cases committed under the One Step Step Investigator. Yet Lovell and Newsweek feature [illegible] was to keep the job to the throats of Espinosa. In the end, anything is possible if the price is right. Here, consequence is the name of the game: one for you, one for me.

. . .

I have various several issues in the past about the same tax credit scam when newspapers told me that some officials and government agencies were not enthusiastic about going after the culprits. They were protecting their own rights.

The reason is probably that the only could not have been perpetrated without the cooperation of some officials of the Department of Finance. I was just the suspect fraternization on the fools, they were simpler cases to unfasten their partners in privateness.

The tax credit system originally had a good purpose. To encourage exports, companies importing materials for processing into export products and paying import duties and taxes on them are given tax refunds after they have exported their products. Instead of paying the refunds in cash, they are given tax credit certificates issued by the DOF, which they can use to pay their taxes.

The big mistake was in allowing the recipients to sell the tax credit certificates (TCCs) to third parties which could use them to pay their own taxes. Since operators are also in an opportunity to make oodles of money easily. They manufactured import documents which they presented to the DBM so as for tax refunds. They made fictitious companies that also asked for tax refunds. The DBM personnel were very cooperative. Thus, our government was paying tax refunds to those who never paid taxes in all.

. . .

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Ninoy in any generation have wondered about whether Marcos-type censorship would even be possible today anywhere in the world, much less here. Would technology be enough to reach and blare unwanted images people to watch and blare unwanted images. Or when I met China and ask students about the Tiananmen massacre of 1989, I get the feeling that that is a topic "Of Which They Cannot Speak." "Yes, that is to the point" is the further response. Or to acknowledge the fact that millions could gathered in Tiananmen Square to mourn even as no one dares even discuss that once fully plowed out before CNN and certainly accessible on the Internet.

It is true that I overdramatize a bit before Ninoy assembled. My censorship is not about my head-ups. It is about time. The recent killings of journalists prove once more the brutalness of power. Nor let them the sophisticated modes of censorship, of hacking and nasty websites, or of bombing those with inconvenient truths, or indeed of those who simply do not have the technology computer systems and silencing the content. So, it is to please in us killing the messenger if you dislike the message, and claiming "The killing effect" that the Constitution guards against.

Rachel, indeed, Mater did to the name. By late death, a cannon found no example. But can then sadly needs to be replenished time and again with the blood of heroes.

Cabinet not an agent of change

PRESIDENT Macapagal-Arroyo's Cabinet appointments announced on Wednesday offered no surprises and were no signals of radical policy changes. They confirmed uncertainties that had been going on since her inauguration 40 days ago. The uncertainties concerned mainly her core supporters over how she will set up the new Administration's team.

Outsiders, especially from the business community, are now convinced that there will be no policy surprises. The economic and fiscal policy agenda have already been broadly outlined in two presidential speeches this month: the 20-point agenda elaborated by the State of the Nation Address and the eight-point statement intended to remedy the bloated fiscal deficit.

Together with the Cabinet appointments announced on Wednesday, the line-up of the Administration's top economic and fiscal team is complete and the Department of Agriculture department as well as the retention of the trade secretary and the anti-economic planning secretary, we now have no reason to kill present economic policies. Instead, the President can then count on the Administration's economic team to continue the present policy regimen to maximize results.

The Cabinet appointments announced on Wednesday represent an amalgamation of political rewards, continuity of technocratic expertise and knowledge and the replacement of those whose performance has been found wanting. Only a few cabinet members are considered the "must-haves" for the Administration to succeed. Among these are Finance Secretary Juanita Amatong, Budget Secretary Emilia Boncodin, Trade Secretary Cesar Purisima, Agriculture Secretary William Dar, Energy Secretary Vicente Perez Jr., Environment Secretary Michael Defensor, Interior Secretary Angelo Reyes, Agrarian Reform Secretary Nasser Pangandaman, Public Works Secretary Simeon Datumanong, Transportation Secretary Leandro Mendoza, Tourism Secretary Richard Gordon, Health Secretary Manuel Dayrit, Education Secretary Raul Roco, Labor Secretary Patricia Sto. Tomas, Social Welfare Secretary Dinky Soliman, Presidential Adviser on Peace Process Jesus Dureza, Presidential Adviser on Overseas Filipino Workers Affairs Rosario Manalo, Presidential Adviser on Entrepreneurship Joey Concepcion, Presidential Adviser on Flagship Projects Jose Romero, Presidential Adviser on Poverty Alleviation Esteban Conejos Jr., Presidential Adviser on Housing Arturo Valdez, Presidential Adviser on Science and Technology Jaime Ongpin, Presidential Adviser on Northern Mindanao Development Jesus Dureza, Presidential Adviser on Southern Mindanao Development Robert Aventajado, Presidential Adviser on Visayas Development Ramon Durano VI, Presidential Adviser on Luzon Development Ramon Mitra Jr., Presidential Adviser on Metro Manila Development Ronaldo Puno, Presidential Adviser on Political Affairs Eduardo Ermita, Presidential Adviser on Military Affairs Norberto Gonzales, Presidential Adviser on Legislative Affairs Joker Arroyo, Presidential Adviser on Special Concerns Ramon Bagatsing, Presidential Adviser on Youth Affairs Ramon Jacinto, Presidential Adviser on Sports Development Alfrredo Lim, Presidential Adviser on Cultural Affairs Ricardo Manapat, Presidential Adviser on Women's Affairs Luz Rimban, Presidential Adviser on Muslim Affairs Michael Mastura, Presidential Adviser on Indigenous Peoples Affairs Jose Anoy, Presidential Adviser on Disabled Persons Affairs Edgardo Angara, Presidential Adviser on Senate Affairs Aquilino Pimentel Jr., Presidential Adviser on House of Representatives Affairs Prospero Nograles, Presidential Adviser on Cooperatives Development Jose Maria Aquino, Presidential Adviser on Muslim Affairs Abdullah Dimaporo, Presidential Adviser on Indigenous Peoples Affairs Antonio Tuaño

God's gifts to the Filipino people

TOKYO, July 20, 2004, Sunday issue of the Philippine Daily Inquirer carried a list of articles that caused me to shed tears of joy as I read them. Yes, because the sweet scent of the land that makes us really proud to be Filipinos.

1. The selflessness and statesmanship Vice President Noli de Castro showed in giving way to Social Welfare Secretary Corazon "Dinky" Soliman to remain as head of the Department of Social Welfare and Development. May his humility and sacrifice serve as an example for other government officials to emulate.

2) The success of the Mandaluyong children's choir which won second place in the youth category of the international singing competition recently held in Canada.

3) Renato Salgado, the boxer Filipino cabbie who returned the P74,000 worth of pearls that a passenger left in a backpack in the cab due he was driving in New York. The "good lord boy groomed by childhood misery" to become a capable and respected person, thus he's now a hero just for doing something good.

4) August A. Cruz's column on Executive Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo's honorable decision to pull out our humanitarian forces from Iraq. Cruz would not allow other world leaders to brand us as a nation of cowards but would rather instead see and all of what Chief Justice Enrique M. Fernando aptly called "the valor of repentance."

5) Last but not the least, today's include Rev. Fr. James B. Reuter's "At 5:00 A.M." in the July 28, 2004 issue of another boundless Filipino's faith in Catholic Philippine (the first big thin moment we go to the United States, I never regretted coming to the Philippines and never regretted staying here. The Filipinos are the most lovable people in the world. He expressed his admiration for our country and to people more than in his own country. As the cited verses, "If you are looking for the most beautiful child in the world you have to come home to the Philippines."

Amen's all these God's blessings for our country and the Filipino people! Let us be thankful for them.

—RENATO BELTRAN GARCIA
Isonsville,
Magallanes Village, Makati City

LETTERS

Who's scaring investors?

THIS has reference to a letter written by Mr. Peter Dupon titled "Consumer's judicial remembrance," which appeared in your paper on Aug. 9. I do not have to defend Mr. Consumer since I am sure he can take care of himself. What I could say in reply to Dupon's irresponsible statements against Meralco is:

I must admit, however, Mr. Dupon's statement in pursuing his objective to demolish Meralco by painting the company not only in a bad light, but tried to re-write a name on our finances.

He says so far loose and I quote, "Investors or general are scared many because of excessive cost recoveries, e.g., high power rates, charged by Meralco."

After such a long time of possessing himself as a consumer advocate in the power industry, how can Mr. Dupon be so naive in believing that the high power rates are caused by Meralco? Just for the very well known fact, Meralco necessary for only about 10 percent of the consumers' total bills. Because of Dupon's "consumer amnesia," he fails to consider other components in the charges in bills, such as, generation, transmission and universal charges, among others.

Contrary to what Dupon would like us to believe, it is not the so-called "high rates" which are behind the investors' negative sentiments. It is people like Dupon, with misleading and irresponsible statements, that drive investors away.

I would rather see white paper by some Filipino rather counsel, in-hushed statements as we already have done that in several fora in the past.

I would just like to give Mr. Dupon an unsolicited advice. If he intends to enter the electricity supply business in the country, maybe he should act more professionally by forming not with statements based on facts, not on half-truths. Consumers, in the long run, are able to see through statements such as his.

—ELFEO CUNA, JR.,
vice president and
head corporate communications,
Meralco,
Lopez Building, Meralco Center,
Ortigas Avenue, Pasig City

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big Supercenter

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Voices on taxes

THERE's no need to addressed taxes. When the government should do a make sure that the agencies concerned with revenue collection are doing their tasks. Else there, toward the tobacco farmers, (at the coverage, get tax before loss, and give the taxpayer what they fully deserve.—Ann Sinlahian 228 Rein Tong Apartments, Soi 47, Sukhumvit Road, Chomchan, Bangkok, Thailand (via e-mail)

VOICES ON INQ7.NET

I have no doubt that through our newly established (TGIs), the government's pockets are picked wide by systematic, well-measured process: the first time, in the benefits (new) personnel payments of taxes; the second time, when the enrollment will like any other commercial area. And we think that the enrollees are vulnerable to duplications, forgery, over-taxation, etc.

The TGC system is visible for some, and more for targeted. But who should step in, when everybody involved is probably cashing in on it?—Hon. Sabastian, Calamba, Laguna, (via e-mail)

There are many ways for the government to raise revenues but I think the top priority should be on taxing. Since it is willing to try out a new form of government, then it ought to wait its new ways to serve.

I have my suggestions will see in able to preserve the culture heroes do not pull in officials, but be in some form anyway.

1. Why not scrap the pork barrel, then reinstated the savings to local governments? The funds will go strong even to the hands of the LGUs. They can also be easily audited. Why entrust huge sums of money to the power in Congress when they have not proven their worth since 1986?

2. Should the Constitution be amended, it would be better to limit the number of congressmen and senators. If a congress is bankrupt, the logical thing to do is lay off people who are not vital to the operations. If representation is the issue, I think one senator should for the whole city of Manila. Power people in Congress means less exemption, fewer debates, fewer salaries to pay, and less politics, which may lead to a lighter cost in passing bills.

3. Instead of creating new agencies, why not merge agencies with similar functions? It seems the government wants to employ everyone. There are many non-functional agencies—or are they created to serve someone?

4. Greater efficiency of Internal Revenue units have dedicated to running after tax evaders. That will be enough.—Rodolfo C. Dalisay, Blk. 4 Seminaryan Road, Singapore 129900, (via e-mail)

Filipinos love a reporter to complain about problems without offering solutions.

Let's take for example the proposed tax on text messaging. If the government charges P1 centavo per text, it will raise P1 billion per month! Ten text messages a day will cost only an extra peso. This can easily be covered by sending one stick of cigarette (which costs P1.50) less every day. The users (1 centavo, if multiplied by the billions of text messages sent out, will translate to millions of pesos for the government. I urge the government to use the money from text messages solely for education.—Rommel Abela, Balintawak, Quezon City (via e-mail)

If you have any complaints, grievances or suggestions about the treatment of cases and persons by the Inquirer, you may write to the Readers' Advocate, Philippine Daily Inquirer, Chino Roces Avenue, corner Yague and Mercedes Streets, City of Makati or send a fax to fax 897-4795/897-4784, or e-mail readersadvocate@inquirer.com.ph.

Writers of letters to the editor are required to include their complete address and telephone or pager number or e-mail address for verification purposes. The Inquirer will not publish any letter unless such information is supplied.

Across the NATION

Family feud led to Army-MILF clash

COTABATO CITY—A family feud led to fighting between government soldiers and Moro Islamic Liberation Front rebels in Datu Saudi Ampatuan, Maguindanao on Tuesday that killed three persons, including an Army officer.

A committee monitoring compliance with a ceasefire agreement between the rebels and the government made this conclusion after investigating the clash between the soldiers and rebels.

The armed encounter did not violate the 1997 ceasefire agreement, said members of the committee on the ceasefire of hostilities led by Brig. Gen. Alexander Yano of the government and Benjie Maltimbang of the MILF.

Malimbang said the rebels just defended themselves after unyielding soldiers from the 57th IB in among members of a government militia unit Dapiawan village chief Limon Tebeh when fired upon by about 30 rebels.

Solano considered the incident as a truce violation, but said "it's up to members of the CCCH (monitoring committee) to find out who's at fault or which group violated the agreement."

MILF spokesperson Eid Kabalu said the armed rebels belonging to the Civilian Armed Forces Geographical Unit and under the command of Tebeh killed Eshal and Ebin, who were suspected of stealing cattle.

While the victims' relatives tried to retrieve their bodies, they were blocked Tebeh's men, prompting MILF relatives of the victims to intervene.

Subsequently, Tebeh's followers sought Army reinforcement after fled to the gun battle, Solano said.

Kabalu said the family feud originated November last year when a Tebeh's relative and security escort Salimbit Zacaria killed a certain "Kimbo," a trusted ally of the prominent Ginupar family of Datu Saudi Ampatuan. Charlie Saliano, PDI Mindanao Bureau

Gov't agrees to tests of banned shrimp species amid importation plans

MANILA, Reuters—The government has approved a ban on the breeding and culture of the shrimp species Litopenaeus stylirostris, which it has banned in the last 20 years, to protect the P30 billion ($540 million) export industry.

"The decision on whether to allow or ban the importation of shrimps will be made based on the result of this experiment," Malcolm Bernardo, director of the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources, said.

For the trial phase, the government will use specific pathogen resistant stocks from Barbados, Hawaii.

Initially, the experiment will involve 10,000 stocks from Taiwan, where viral diseases of marine, locally called "vaan," had been monitored.

The experiment, he said, would be done in the BFAR's station in Bataan City.

"It will be done under controlled environment and we will be monitoring every thing," Amonsorio said.

He said before all the aquatic life is fully destroyed, the government will terminate the project.

Through the test, Amonsorio said his agency could "decide with finality" whether to allow necessary importation.

In the last five years, fresh manufacturers have strongly lobbied for the entry. Some groups, on the other hand, have sought viable alternatives to save growers' livelihoods.

Reports said some officials of the Board of Investments are supporting proposals to legalize the entry of carnivores to boost the country's dollar earnings.

The Department of Trade and Industry, however, has not categorically supported or objected to the importation plan.

The BFAR last year seized at least four shipments of unmarked penaeid all as mudfish fry and smuggled through the Ninoy Aquino International airport, Subic Bay International airport and Laoag International airport.

Bern, with the last, 700 hectares of ponds in Bataan, Pampanga, Zambales and Quezon have been stocked with carnivorous, according to a Old Bataan Provincial Veterinarian Nonelle Reyes, PDI Central Luzon Desk

DOJ asked to step into probe of GenSan reporter's murder

GENERAL SANTOS CITY—The Task Force Media (TFM) here has urged the Department of Justice to conduct a separate investigation of the Aug. 3 murder of DZRH-Super Radio reporter Jonathan Abayon.

TFM, which was organized by the local newsmen to monitor the progress of the case filed against the suspect in the killing of Abayon, urged Justice Secretary Hermogenes Cadeveras to intervene in the investigation and prosecution of the case to avoid a possible whitewash.

The local police had already filed murder complaint against the suspect William Buel, who remains at large.

In a letter dated Aug. 17, TFM said it was "quite apprehensive of the possible outcome of the investigation by local authorities considering that the chief city prosecutor in General Santos City is a close relative of Mr. Perpetuo's wife Jinky Antonio Bacquian."

Newsmen have been also irked by the premature pronouncement made by Supt. Nilda Dinopol, city police director, ruling out the involvement of boxing champion Manny Pacquiao in the killing of the DZRH reporter.

The movement's apprehension was further bolstered by Dinopol's objection to the TFM's move asking the National Bureau of Investigation (NBI) in Manila to take the lead in investigating the case.

Dinopol, in one of his media interviews, insisted that requesting NBI to intervene would jeopardize the murder case filed against Buel.

The media practitioners were wondering why the police hastily filed the case even when there was no autopsy conducted on the victim's body.

On Monday, Abayon's wife, Lyndi, wrote local officials a letter requesting for an autopsy of her husband's remains. Agustin Cenit and Myra Bocanog, PDI Mindanao Bureau

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DAMROS COMMERCIAL, INC.

Town execs assume posts

By Joey A. Gabieta
PhilStar Bureau

TALUBAN (27)—The elected officials of the town of Victorias, Northern Samar finally assumed office on Thursday last week, two months after their winners in the May 10 elections have taken office.

Mayor Nicolas Pareja Jr., Vice Mayor Gilbert Abella and the eight town council members assumed their posts by virtue of an en banc decision of the Commission on Elections dated Aug. 4 directing the municipal board of canvassers to proclaim the duly elected winners of the May 10 elections.

Pelilian Dato, the regional director of the Department of Interior and Local Government in Eastern Visayas, said the DILG regional office was informed of the assumption of the town's elected officials on Tuesday through their provincial office in Catarman, Northern Samar.

With the assumption into office of the elected officials of Victorias, only the town of Silvino Lobos, also in Northern Samar, remains without elected officials in the region.

The regional office of DILG had assigned caretakers for the two towns.

Caretaker Taduo, the caretaker designate, returns to his post.

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2 govs seek better pay for docs

BACOLOD CITY—The Government of Negros Island are seeking the amendment of the Salary Standardization Law to provide higher wages for government doctors and nurses to prevent them from leaving the country to work abroad.

Governors Joseph Marañon of Negros Occidental and George Arnaiz of Negros Oriental urged compensation on the island to push for the law's revision.

Joey Ma. Sarenas, chief of staff of Marañon, said the two provincial governments could not raise the wages of these medical workers due to the caps set by the Salary Standardization Law.

In the meantime, he added, the government hospitals are losing their medical workers to foreign hospitals.

Arriving on behalf of Sharon, Velasco met with Arnaiz on Tuesday in Dumaguete City. Negros Oriental officials are joint measures to ensure that both provinces were able to provide quality health services.

Velasco said Arnaiz told him that some district hospitals in Negros Oriental might have to be closed because of lack of doctors.

In the case of Negros Occidental, Velasco said the 11 provincial hospitals might lose 30 percent of their doctors and 270 percent of their nurses to jobs abroad.

Several government clinics are forced to shift nurses by taking up nursing courses due to low pay.

Salary of government doctors ranges from P15,000 to P18,000 a month, and about 100,000 for nurses. But if they work in the United States as nurses, they will receive an equivalent to up to P150,000 to 200,000 a month. In the United Kingdom, nurses are paid P135,000 a month.

Top congressmen in Negros Occidental have expressed support for the move to amend the Salary Standardization Law.

Negros Occidental Rep. Alfredo Marañon III (second district, brother of the governor) agreed that the salaries of doctors should be increased to persuade them to stay in the country.

Negros Occidental Rep. Iglesia Arenas A. Yulo (fourth district) said he would seek the support of other lawmakers, not just in his province, for the law's amendment because the number of health workers is losing life nationwide.

"We need to keep our good doctors here to help carry out our people," he said.

Pending amendment of the law, Negros provincial government officials in Negros Occidental have urged them to stay.

Lorie Gomez, PIR Visayas Bureau

FOOD HUH'S LOAD! Protesters, including some who couldn't leave their babies behind, join a rally in Baguio City to demand a stop to continuing increases on oil prices, which has made the poor's burden heavier.

Execs declare Bulacan in state of calamity

CITY OF MALOLOS—The provincial government has declared a state of calamity in the agricultural areas of Bulacan due to the shortage of irrigation water supply from the National Irrigation Administration.

Gov. Josefina de la Cruz and Efren Carillo, Department of Agriculture provincial chief, recommended the calamity state declaration to allow the provincial government to use funds to save the rice and vegetable farms in the province.

Carillo said farmers have lost at least P3 million worth of crops due to the lack of irrigation water from the Angat Dam.

He said with the state of calamity declaration, the provincial government could immediately identify the areas hardest hit by the water shortage and supply them with water pumps and shallow tube wells.

He said the recent increase in the water elevation in the dam remains insufficient to supply the irrigation needs of Bulacan farmers.

Rain-dependent

Carillo said a huge part of the 26,000 hectares of agricultural land in Bulacan being irrigated by NIA is dependent on the Angat Dam as reservoir.

He said only 14,000 hectares are irrigated by the natural water flow from the Bocaue and Marilao rivers in the northeastern areas of the province.

Since March this year, the Angat Dam has stopped releasing water to supply to the NIA for irrigation needs of farmers because of the continuous drop in the reservoir level.

Mendell Garcia, chief of the Angat Watershed reservoir, said they were forced to cut off irrigation water supply when the dam's level reached 180 meters early this year.

The dam's average water level is between 189 meters and 210 meters while its spilling level is 214 meters.

The lowest level recorded this year was 167.17 meters on July 15 this year.

Garcia said that priority is to supply the potable water needs of Metro Manila and its outlying areas.

He said 90 percent of the water reserve in Angat goes to Metro Manila while the rest goes to the irrigation needs of Bulacan.

Dam officials are blaming the lack of rain over the watershed area in Bulacan from January to June this year for the water shortage. Carmela Reyes, PIR Central Luzon Desk

Gov, execs celebrate birthday of Quezon

LUCENA CITY—Quezon Gov. Wilfrido Enverga led the Rizal offering at the foot of the Quezon Monument at the capitol ground in Barangay Ibabang Iyam yesterday during the observance of the 126th birthday of the late president of the Philippine Commonwealth, Manuel Luis Quezon.

Sen. Richard Gordon who supported to be the guest of honor by the office but he did not make it because for the flood affecting early yesterday morning.

Instead, the former secretary of tourism led the guests in the inauguration of the Gotokouai Hall on the third floor of the old provincial capitol in front of the park.

Provincial and local government officials and representatives of non-government organizations, private officers, military, religious and schools joined the floral offering.

Quezon Bishop Emilio Marquez and several priests officiated a Catholic Mass at the foot of the historic monument before the flower offering.

Quezon was born on Aug. 19, 1878 in the small town of Baler, Tayabas, now Quezon.

He died in Saranac Lake in the United States on Aug. 1, 1944 at the age of 66.

Jeep drivers cry unfair competition vs bus lines

SORSOGON CITY—A competition between buses and jeepneys in Sorsogon province is brewing, with buses charging lower than those assigned to have more passengers.

Jeepney operators and drivers here are complaining. The Federation of Jeepney Operators and Drivers Associations Inc. (Fodai, Sbd.) a complaint at the regional office of the Land Transportation Franchising and Regulatory Board in Legazpi City, saying buses plying Legazpi, Sorsogon, Bulan and Matnog were not charging the correct fare.

Ding Bobis, head of the Sorsogon Provincial Transport Authority (Pasta), said that bus fares charge passengers lower than the amounts prescribed in their tickets.

Bobis said the LTFRB had arranged a meeting between jeepney and bus operators on July 30 but no memorandum of agreement between the groups had been signed.

"The MOA is supposed to remove the charging of the correct bus rate, but their (bus operators) are not following it until now. For some 3,000 jeepney drivers in Sorsogon," Bobis said.

But Assistant Justice Almonds of Quezon Express said the jeepney operators and drivers have no "personality to file the complaint" since "jeepneys are of a different classification from buses."

The approved bus fare rate is P0.94 for the first 5 km and P1.20 for the succeeding km and P0.80 for jeepneys for the first 4 kilometers and P1 for succeeding kilometers.

For 24 kilometers, the buses charge P45, P11 less than the correct fare of P56, Bobis said.

From Legazpi to Sorsogon and vice versa, buses are supposed to charge P60.50, while jeepneys charge P55.50 for Daraga-Sorsogon route.

Pasta said its members charge the correct rate based on their franchise.

Bobis said they have been urging the LTFRB to act on this complaint.

"I was told that they will send us a notice for another hearing, but they "ne-ver given us any date," he said. Tonie Bronio, PDI Bicol Sorsogon Bureau

FRIDAY, AUGUST 20, 2004

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

SPORTS

MARKET

Cito hopes Obet stays at Philsoc

By Armando T. Doronila Jr.
Sports Editor

ATHENS—The trip to Athens and his search with the athletes during the opening ceremonies of the Olympic Games will not be for naught for outgoing Tourism Secretary Roberto Pagdanganan.

That is, if he is retained as honorary chairman of the Philippine Sportscast Amateur Games Commission (Philsoc), the body that will organize the Sportscast Asian Games in Manila next year.

"It's all up to the President," said Cito "Cito" Beltran, president of both the Philsoc and Philippine Olympic Committee. "It's his call. Everything depends on his relationship with the President. Philsoc's important to him otherwise why there an honorary chairman will have the full support and the mandate of the President."

After days after watching with the Philippine delegation during the opening ceremonies here, Pagdanganan was replaced as honorary secretary by Cebu Rep. Antonio Cuenco.

The former Malacañang president and agencies where secretary was appointed head of the Philippine Government and Trade Corp. (PTC).

As honorary chairman of Philsoc, Pagdanganan seen to

(continued on page 2)

RP SCHEDULE

(Manila time) Friday, Aug. 20, 2004

SWIMMING Olympic Aquatic Center
Men's 100-meter freestyle, Heats, 3:31 p.m.: Miguel Molina

OLYMPICS MEDAL TALLY

COUNTRY	G	S	B	TOTAL
China	3	0	0	3
Russia	2	1	0	3
Czech Republic	2	0	1	3

Country	G	S	B	Total

New defense secretary under siege

From page A1

the concerning."

Team-ranging Defense Secretary Eduardo Ermita told Cruz, 51, was the right man for the job.

"Secretary Cruz will fit very well in the [AFP] because he has been with the bureaucracy for some time now. He has been exposed to goings-on in the various departments," Ermita, who was ousted executive secretary, said at a Manila Overseas Press Club forum.

Cruz himself said he could hang to the job "a fresh outlook from a civilian point of view" and would push for reforms in the military and defense establishment because he had "no deep ties" with the military.

He denied that his appointment to a major department was another powerful political accommodation to the Villarosa & Angangco Law Office, formerly the Cayetano Villarosa & Cruz Law Office, of which he is a founding partner.

The law office is called "The Firm" because of its influence in private counsels of the Ilocos family.

Mr. Arroyo's appointee, Supreme Court Justice Antonio Carpio and brother-in-law Honorio Poblador, are also former partners. Cruz himself, prior to his DND posting, was the presidential legal adviser.

"The law office does not interfere with the government," Cruz said. But he declared: "I will make sure that they [the law office and its clients] don't ever come near the [DND]."

Cruz also said it had been so long since he resigned as a partner in the law office—in 2001—that he was wondering why critics continued to associate him with it.

"I think people should stop linking me with my previous affiliation," he said.

Sensitive to Oakwood issues

He also said that as far as he would recall, the law office and its clients had had no dealings with the military and defense establishments.

Cruz said he was comfortable in the issues raised by the young officers who led the Oakwood hotel in Makati City, which not only he had made damaging out-cry against in the military case of his top priorities.

"My goal is to ensure transparency and fair play in all military contracts," he said. "This is why I have asked the Secretary of Budget and Management to take over the procurement of key military supplies."

The DND is one of the biggest funded departments, with multibillion-peso projects involving military modernization and equipment procurement.

According to Cruz, Mr. Arroyo decided to pick a civilian because the Feliciano Commission, which she had formed to investigate the causes of the failed mutiny on July 27, 2003, asked for it.

The commission to run is endorsed the recommendation of the Davide Commission, which looked into the causes of the coup attempts during the Aquino administration.

In its report, the Feliciano Commission said: "Beyond the need to institutionalize the supremacy of the civilian authority over the military, the appointment of persons who have not had long and deep ties to the military, and who have not held positions in the military establishment that lend itself easily to be subverted, is essential if a reform program is to succeed.

Not micro-manage

"Although military officers acquire a civilian status upon retirement, they are likely to bring the rigidity of hierarchy, seniority, camaraderie and other aspects of the military culture into the office of the [DND] Secretary of National Defense."

The commission in fact endorsed the appointment of a civilian to the post.

Cruz said he would not micro-manage the military, and will leave day-to-day operations to the military establishment that itself needs to be reformed, to the military and who have not held positions in the military establishment that itself needs to be reformed, to the military and who have not held positions in the military establishment that itself needs to be reformed, to the military and who have not held positions in the military establishment that itself needs to be reformed,

Convicted soldier tags close Aquino relative

[Paragraph] ed that the late Senator Ninoy Aquino was behind the killing of his father.

Marquez, 47, made and signed the affidavit with the help of the Public Attorney's Office in the hope of reopening the case.

The handwritten text was entered Marquez said in letters in 1989 for the murders of Aquino and Rebello. They were also transcribed on different occasions.

Cojuangco a link

The Aquino aides said it was not logical to link Cojuangco to the assassination by merely saying that "most of those involved in the crime came from Central Luzon.

"Cojuangco is from Central Luzon, this is true. That is not possible. Marquez is from Tarlac. Doesn't that show it is also possible that Cojuangco had nothing to do with the crime?" Aquino said.

Cojuangco is the alleged financier behind the Galman case.

Aquino said it was saddening that these unfounded accusations surface everytime is the death anniversary of the senator's murder.

"There was no evidence from past investigations that Mr. Cojuangco was involved in the Aquino assassination that happened 21 years ago. It is ridiculous that such allegations come at a time when those sentenced of the crime are appealing for presidential clemency," he said.

The double murder sparked a tumultuous series of events that led to the downfall of Marcos in 1986, propelling Aquino's widow to the presidency.

Marquez said that the affidavit he had filed with Justice of Secretary Raul Gonzalez to reopen the case.

Gonzalez Director Eleodoro Simbulan "is a true servant of the law. I trust which was not revealed during the trial and would make hearings on the Aquino-Galman double murder case."

True account

Marquez said he had facilitated interviews that Galman and Rebello instructed by Gov. Romeo Gatan and Maximino Gonzalez to kill Aquino on Aug. 21, 1983.

Marquez said Col. Romeo Ochoco, former deputy commander of the defunct Aviation Security Command, instructed him to monitor Galman's activities two days before the assassination.

On the morning Aquino was killed, Marquez said Galman met with Gatan, Gonzalez and Ochoco at the Cadiz Hotel in Pantabangan.

The convicted soldier said he heard Galman tell Ochoco "to do what he had to and that Marquez will kill him."

He said Ochoco even tried to convince him to make Sgt. Rolando de Guzman, who was part of the group he re-united upon the Aquinos' death, take the rap for the murders. But Marquez said he refused.

Marquez then recounted how De Guzman shot Galman after the latter shot the senator in the back of the Manila International Airport tarmac.

"Gatan, Gonzalez and Galman were most of those involved in the President Cory Aquino. I will name his name in the proper forum," Marquez said in his affidavit.

Cory had true

He also said Ochoco was "a man of God, Iglesia Ni, Ben Armed Forces of the Philippines chief of staff."

"The reason why I kept this to myself for so many years because during those times I feared I would be liquidated," he said.

Marquez, who is now a pastor of a religious group, added: "I do these revelations because of the conversion of the Holy Spirit in my second coming but it is the truth."

MBP chaplain Bobot Olaguer said the convicted soldier "had always been prepared to give their statements."

"They said they would reveal the mastermind in the proper forum," Olaguer said.

Review affidavit

DOJ chief Perfecto Bautista Asuncion said he would review the affidavit to determine if there was anything new in Marquez's claims that would merit a reopening of the case.

The said she would ask the Supreme Court to reopen the case if the evidence warranted it.

There was one aggressive about the accusation.

Ochoco said the Dilis were absolutely right those witnesses who might be able to corroborate Marquez's claims.

"They might be able to find more light on the scenario we behind the killings," he said.

Asuncio is scheduled to go to the Sen. Bilibid Prisons in Muntinlupa to get the affidavits of the 14 others who were convicted of having a hand in the double murder.

Besides Galman, the other convicts in the double murder case still detained are Capt. Romeo Baconto and Sergeants Rolando Mateo, Romeo Canlas, Rolando Bilano, Rolando delos Guzman, Ruben Aquino, Felicisimo Tecson and Cordova Estolo.

Also detained were the members of the founding panel who reached Aquino first on the tarmac—Sgt. Escudero, Sgt. Cleto Lit, Sgt. Manuel Mirasol, Sgt. Arnulfo de Pilar, CIC Mario Garlejo, and CIC Rogelio Moises.

Former Associate Justice Reg. Gutierrez Cordova was also summoned but declined interpretation.

Asuncio said Marquez accepted the affidavit in the hope that he and his fellow convicts might be pardoned.

Lack of merit

On Aug. 3, the Supreme Court dismissed for procedural problems to be reviewed the "lack of merit."

And last year, the court ordered served a total of 12 years to prison, including the time they were detained during their trial.

Under the law, prisoners sentenced to double reclusion perpetua could not be paroled unless their sentences were commuted first, said Board of Pardons and Parole Chairman Reynaldo Tamayo. Tamayo, head of the Board of Pardons and Parole.

"That is why we mentioned [Their petition for parole] cannot be entertained without [their sentences] being commuted first," he said.

Domingo said votes need concurrence while in prison would have no effect unless the sentence of reclusion perpetua was commuted.

In August last year, the Aquino family backed down appeals from the convicts for the commutation of their double-life sentences.

Show remorse

Representative Aquino said that the court in should first admit to killing his father.

"We told them that the lowest minimum these soldiers can do is to admit what they have done and show remorse," Aquino said.

In his affidavit, Marquez still claimed that it was Galman who shot the dead Aquino.

2 'unaccounted for' witnesses

Former Deputy Speaker and now Justice Secretary Raul Gonzalez said he may declare two "states-omitted Val" military officers who could shed more light on the double-murder cases.

He identified them as former Col. Romeo Ochoco and Capt. Felipe Rivera.

As Tuesday-eve, Gonzales had prosecuted the case in the Sandiganbayan. He said Ochoco, who had been with the Presidential Security Command, was reportedly in Australia, and that Valtes, commander of the Aviation Security Command years that died near Galman at the bottom of the then Manila International Airport, might be in Canada.

The double-murder case was initially investigated by the Feliciano Commission, and subsequently by the Agrava Commission.

Acquitted in Marcos time

The accused had been tried in the Sandiganbayan under Justice Manuel Barcelona and acquitted in 1985, during the time of Marcos.

After Marcos was deposed and Ninoy's widow became the President, witness petitioned the Supreme Court to reopen the case.

The case was again tried in a special division of the Sandiganbayan, which in 1990 found the 15 guilty. Twenty others were acquitted for lack of evidence. With a report from Elizabeth A. Sanchez

Bicol village . . .

[Paragraph] "Pandanggo (assured)," was how another photographer described the gathering crowd.

Chaotic

Villagers were clueless for the most part. Rampaging Congressmen pulling irrelevants submitted. Press radio and television reports. But by mid-hour of the celebration of two soldiers by the restaurant. Boo People's Army, she said. But no one knew the captives were being held in the province, or that they were expected to be released in their town that day.

Bombarals had just come from Naga City and "was really surprised to see lots of media vehicles and cameramen from such companies as GMA 7 and ABS-CBN" like and representatives of the Regional Mayoralty Mobilization, who served as media coordinators that they had but what was going on.

Shortly before 6 p.m., the two soldiers—Lt. Rolando Teleñas and Pfc. Noriel Rumales—arrived with their families and some government officials for a press briefing following the five-and-a-half years in the enemy hills.

'Very simple'

Bombarals believed the event was nothing less than "historic."

Politically, it is "very simple" community, the barangay captain said, with a population of 5,700, of less than three of the townsfolk are for more and deliberate. More than three hours by car from Naga City and accessible only through an unconcreted road—traversing a mountainous terrain and overlooking the Pasalit Ocean—the place is considered remote.

The visiting media were held overnight in Lagonoy Park in Barangay Alibay. They left at 11:30 a.m., drove through rugged roads, thick dust and over some muddy stretches, and even had their drivers and company and relocated.

Though a second date seems that the event could result in the military briefing their village a rebel-infested area, security of Bikolnon residents were "troubled" by the hostage-taking drama.

Blessing in disguise?

Quite a few braved rain to tell detail fish and other foodstuff to the victims, happily making sure with money.

A man in his mid-40s who has lived in Bikolnon all his life said the event obviously concerned the whole country and was therefore important. "We are proud to be part of that," he said.

Benefit

More important, he said the hostage, the nationwide media exposure could only benefit the village and, in fact, the whole municipality—and the rest of Camarines Sur.

"You see the condition of our roads?" he said. "We hope this will be our way for the government to see what people in remote areas have to endure."

Cito hopes Obet stays at Philsoc

AWAY! Tunisian (right) lands a punch on Turkmenistan's Murad Ovezov's face during the light flyweight boxing preliminaries in the Athens Olympics.

Mendoza plunges to action

Targets Philippine record

ATHENS—Good-looking swimmer Miguel Mendoza tries to surpass his Philippine record in the 1,500-meter Friday when he finally makes his appearance in the 28th Olympic Games at the Aquatics Center here.

"That's my main objective. That's precisely why I'm training hard to really," said the 22-year-old Mendoza Thursday just before he worked out at 6:30 a.m.

This is the second Olympic stint for Mendoza, a University of Hawaii graduate majoring in MIS. He also earned the RP colors four years ago in Sydney, Australia.

"I want to go one with a bang," said the former Xavier School splasher, who blasted the 1,500 in the morning heat to post qualifying time since I finish school and since swimming behind."

Mendoza's personal record is 15 minutes 00 seconds. "I think I have a good chance of surpassing it," he said. "I feel better, I'm well rested and I'm in better shape than I was four years ago."

Mendoza won the 1500 freestyle gold and shared the 4x200 freestyle relay gold at the Southeast Asian Games in Pasay last December. He also took a silver in the 400 freestyle, where he clocked a respectable time of 4:01.190 when he swam it last Saturday in a warm-up for his 1500 performance.

The 1.8-m-7 surfer also holds the national record of 3:40.59 in the 400 freestyle.

In his early Miguel Molina and 50-American Jaclyn Pangilinan had managed to better national swimming marks. Both had already completed their assignments in the Athens covered the 200 breaststroke in 2:38.19 to erase the 12-year-old standard of 2:38.37 held by Lee Concepcion.

Pangilinan timed 1:12.47 and 2:33.30 in the 100 and 200 breaststroke to wipe out Sonia's 1:12.62 and 2:35.01 national records, respectively. The 19-year-old Filamerican from New Jersey also topped her personal best of 2:34 in the 200.

The latest marks of Pangilinan, who had finished their events here—Raphael Tiozon, Dena and James Barcomb Walsh—both adjusted and broke national records.

Dena clocked 1:00.37 in the 100 breaststroke to erase her personal best of 1:04.95, while Walsh timed 2:06.76, also below his best of 2:04.13.

Except for Dena, all swimmers are training in the US except for Filipino-American coaches. Pangilinan's and Walsh's mentors both come to watch them event here.

IMAGE IS PAIN! Swimmer in 100-m breaststroke at the Athens Olympics.

Pangilinan achieves goal of improving best times

ATHENS—Filamerican swimmer Jaclyn Pangilinan achieved her goal in the 28th Olympic Games Wednesday when she surpassed her best time in the 200-meter breaststroke competition, one of the premier showcasing the Philippine record in the aquatic classic here.

The 19-year-old, New Jersey-based Pangilinan clocked 2 minutes, 33.30 seconds to improve her personal best of 2:34.30 and erase her national mark of 2:35.01.

Pangilinan beat arch-South rival Asian Games gold medalist Seow Yi Ting of Malaysia, who clocked 2:32.79, and Kyrgyzstan's Nadezhda Wu, who timed 2:35.17.

Pangilinan's mentor-coach, Jim Koch, was elated by her performance.

"That's what she came here for. I'm absolutely proud of her," said Koch, who came here with Jaclyn's parents, Ronnie and Audrey, and 21 others to cheer on the Fil-Am.

Pangilinan topped her heat and ranked 20th in a field of 32 as she completed her Cito Olympic stint which personal outcross. She also broke the 1:12.62 set by Sandra Ly clocking 1:12.47.

Another Fil-Am sprinter, 20-year-old Miguel Molina, was pleased his fourth and final event in his Cito Olympic outing by winning the 200 individual medley in 2:00.28.

However, Molina failed to improve his personal best of 2:04.04.

"I felt great although I did not do too well in the breaststroke," said Molina.

Divine intervention

SPECTATOR

AJ N. Mendoza

New Philsoc chair looms with Pagdanganan's exit

By Mary Anthony Reyes

WITH Roberto "Obet" Pagdanganan out as Tourism head, who will be the next chair of the Philippine Southeast Asian Games Organizing Committee?

Pagdanganan, ousted Thursday from Cebu Rep. Joseph Ace Durano and took over as chair of the Philippine International Trading Corporation, is not Philsoc chairman. Vice Chairman Elizabeth Angsioco is Cabinet.

By tradition, the Tourism czar should also be the Philsoc chair. But the committee that creates opportunity presumed by the ambassador, multi-sport SEA Games, which will be hosted by the Philippines next year.

No less than 5,000 foreign athletes, coaches and officials from 10 countries in the Asean region are among guests in the biennial spectacle.

Philippine Olympic Committee president Cito Obet had earlier said the position of Philsoc chair is reserved for a Malacañang choice.

There's still no word on whether Pagdanganan will relinquish the Philsoc post. Neither he nor Cebu congressman although he has already stated in writing is the third pillar of the country's SEA games hosting committee.

In fact, Pagdanganan has just returned to the country after an organizing the Rhymes athletes who are competing in the Athens Olympics, where he hoped to get more pointers before the Greek government stops the Olympics.

But POC insiders said our sports czar is regarding the vice Philsoc chair will have to wait after the Olympics, when top sports officials like Durano and Philippine Sports Commission chief Rey Bataña have returned.

The possibility of having a new chair comes as the heels of the Philsoc's summit early this last week that the Department of Budget and Management typically provide P56 million of the projected P1 billion budget for the 2005 games.

PRIZE: House of the US divorcee championship prize in the parallel bars during the men's gymnastics individual all-around finals in the 2004 Olympics.

Divine intervention

SPECTATOR

AJN Mendoza

LAST Chit came 10 Games before Ramon Bato brought his second bout last night at Olympic boxing, and before I did Bato, I guessed had to Bato to was upset so that Bato will be "pay" box into the of the needed column. It guys without saying that I slow pony for our other Olympic athletes to non-Bato matches.

I always start my picture with "Dear Lord Jesus Christ, good morning. If it's OK with this, please make ____ (name of athlete) and in this case, Ramon Bato) knuckle a winner today. If not OK, then I will not like it against You. Never. Anyhow, I know that You always know what's best for everybody. Thank You very much. In Your Name. In the name of the Father of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, amen."

Also, in case you still don't know the way I do when my wife gives me the good night kiss.

I do my praying inside the nice, air-cooled room in my house where I usually pound my Toshiba laptop trying to drum out columns for this newspaper, which for those of you who don't know, is the 19th Century in futuristic figure speech. I have a telephone in my "Orange Room" that I use to e-mail my columns to the Inquirer.

And speaking of eggs, who are candidates to lure as her husband, the good-natured, very sensible Mong Poping, had passed away a few days back. Dead, on account of various health organ failures and complications brought on by old age. Mong Poping died after a needed nine by nine. He will be terribly missed.

Also, in case you still don't know, I wrote this knowing that Harry Tolentino had won his bid in Olympic fight in Greece, which was held around 1:40 a.m. yesterday, Manila time. I made sure I wouldn't miss watching it on NBA through Bloomberg Sky TV so I had set my alarm clock at 1:15 a.m.

Before the fight, I had this feeling Tolentino would win, not only because the unbeatable Spain Bluecrest had said Tolentino had the best chance to win a medal. Because I was sensing our four #1 guys boxers, but also because Tolentino was making record number of personal competitions in his, with due respect, I am praying Tolentino (Batchelor) would be proven wrong and that Tolentino would win more than a bronze medal. My prayer is for him to win the gold. Whose but happens, it will stop the country's 99-year-old search for a bona-over Olympic gold.

We had been this close to it—Anthony Villanueva winning the bantam silver in the 1964 Tokyo Olympics and Onofre Velasco repeating the feat in the 1996 in Atlanta Olympics.

We had been quite close to it again in the 2000 Sydney Olympics when Arlen Lyon-Ed his opponent by five points with seconds remaining. But failing to get the signal from his corner that he was ahead, Lyon still stopped it and turned around just donning away from his opponent in the fourth and last round. Unfortunately, he got flagged.

There's still no word on whether Pagdanganan will relinquish the Philsoc post. Neither he nor Cebu congressman although he has already stated in writing is the third pillar of the country's SEA games hosting committee.

In fact, Pagdanganan has just returned to the country after an organizing the Rhymes athletes who are competing in the Athens Olympics, where he hoped to get more pointers before the Greek government stops the Olympics.

But POC insiders said our sports czar is regarding the vice Philsoc chair will have to wait after the Olympics, when top sports officials like Durano and Philippine Sports Commission chief Rey Bataña have returned.

The possibility of having a new chair comes as the heels of the Philsoc's summit early this last week that the Department of Budget and Management typically provide P56 million of the projected P1 billion budget for the 2005 games.

SPORTSWATCH

Davao boaters gain under-19 finals

DAVAO Mainland Laguna, 4-0, yesterday to advance to the finals of the inaugural PBF-Sanofi Pesoy National Under-19 Women's Football Championship at the Davao City Recreational Center. Mainland, which received a total of $2,000 that included Philippine Sports Commission chairman Richard Gordon, the Davao del Sur crew is first through Erin Mae Ybanez in the 40th minute, then scored thrice in the final 12 minutes to join the first finals slot of the event's co-organizer by the Philippine Football Federation and the Mainland Sports Association and Football Club. Ybanez, who has been one of the other semifinal between powerhouses National Capital Region and Negros Occidental, which beat Negros 4-0 to advance to the finals. Negros Occidental will play for third place. The double-round tournament backed by Marlboro Kaya Marlboro Country Sanofi-Pesoy is a preparatory for the 2005 Southeast Asian Games to be held in the Philippines next year.

Enduro adventure race flags off today

SIX HUNDRED adventure sports buffs will again display their stamina in the annual Mayday 2004 Enduro Challenge Sunday. Organized by the Mountain Biking Society (MBS), the event will be held in Barangay Sapang Palay in San Jose del Monte, Bulacan. Officials from several adventure sports clubs in the country are expected to join the race. Registration for the P350 individual and P1,000 three-member teams will close at 10 a.m. today. All those who will start on race at the kick-off time and protest the Carmel Plaza in Barangay City where they will go through all checkpoints to score sequential points. By the sports is conducted in a month P200 100 prize other special events

Dutchman joins swimming elite

NETHERLANDS' Inge Dekker kisses Pieter van den Hoogenband, known as the Flying Dutchman, celebrates after winning the 100 freestyle gold and making it make a whole circle of swimming greats in the Athens Olympics.

Fil-Am helps US relay team shatter old Olympic record

ATHENS—Fifteen-year-old Ariel Hoogenband won the men's 100-meter freestyle at the Athens Olympics on Wednesday to become just the third man to win consecutive titles in the event since 1904.

The Flying Dutchman retained the title he won in Sydney in 48.17 seconds but just failed to beat the world record he set in Sydney four years ago, although two other records fell.

The United States broke the oldest world record in swimming to win the women's 4x100 freestyle relay and Aaron Peirsol smashed another in the pool.

Australia's Ashe Ideon crushed the women's 100 freestyle world record in the semifinals.

Japan's Kosuke Hagino captured his second gold by easily winning the 200 meter medley but then other he took the 100 while Dyuke Jukov, gets won the women's 200 butterfly to become Poland's first Olympic swimming champion.

The Ara Hoogenband joined Johnny Weissmuller and Alexander Popov as the only men to successfully defend the 100 freestyle title with a perfectly-timed swim, hitting the boast in the final lap stroke.

South African Roland Schoeman finished second in 48.25 after turning for home well in front.

"I'm not sure when I caught him, I was in a kind of trance in a flow, doing my job and not thinking," said Hoogenband.

Schoeman was philosophical about coming so close to a gold only to be denied in the last few metres.

"People might say I lost the gold medal but I see it as winning the silver," said the 24-year-old.

Ian Thorpe finished third in 48.36, flashing home from ninth at the halfway mark after winning the 200-400 freestyle double earlier.

The US quartet of Natalie Coughlin, Carly Tallman, Dana Vollmer and Kaitlin Sandeno raced the last lane German second from the home with a combined time of 4:01.30 minutes 53.42 seconds.

The old mark of 7:57.47 was set exactly 17 years ago to the day but was lowered from the current Coughlin, who won the 100 backstroke gold, raced through the lead-off almost three seconds under world record pace. Tallman finished second and Germany third.

"Before we started the race I didn't realize the historic significance of the record," said Coughlin, whose mother is from the Philippines.

Sherry, who anchored Australia to gold in the 4x100 relay on Saturday, shred 1:54 seconds off the previous mark of 8:00.67 set by his compatriots, Libby Lenton, of the Australian championships earlier this year to qualify more than half a second ahead of defending champion Inge de Bruijn.

Ardingtrack came through strongly to score a clear victory over Petria Thomas in the 200 freestyle final after the Australian lost her to the 400 on Sunday.

The Pole clocked 2:00.05, outside her own 2:00.79 world mark set at the European championships in Berlin in August 2002.

"It's my first gold medal in the Olympic Games. It's not a world record but I'm still happy," Ardingtrack said.

Petria Thomas, suspected in Athens as a contender to be last out as illegal dolphin kick during the 100 victory on the weekend led all the way to win the 200 breaststroke gold in 2:09.44. Reuters

COUGHLIN

US five survives Aussie scare

ATHENS—A struggling United States basketball team outlasted another Olympic team before finally pulling away in the fourth quarter to defeat Australia, 89-79, here Thursday in an Olympic preliminary-round game.

Tim Duncan scored 16 points while Shawn Marion and Allen Iverson, playing with a broken thumb, added 14 points each as the Americans outscored the Aussies, 24-22, in the final quarter after trailing most of the game.

Four days after Puerto Rico delivered a stunning 92-73 upset of the National Basketball Association stars and two days after Greece battled them to the limit in a 77-71 loss, the Individual Dream Under-steady turned the once-dreamy US-world upside down again.

Shane Wood, who led the Aussies with 27 points, gave Australia a 77-66 lead 5:20 into the game.

The American team could not overcome the advantage until 4:31 remained in the third quarter, when Marion's slam dunk off a left from Iverson gave them a 61-60 edge.

Brett Maher's 3-pointer gave the Aussies a 67-66 edge after three quarters, setting the stage for a fantastic finish that never came.

The US finally found rhythm in its different players scoring in a 14-3 spurt to start the period and Allen Iverson and Marion leading their finals in a 10-3 run to end December's hopes. AFP

A spoon, not a spear, Payla wielded

THEY are from under 2nd EP Aviers Harry Tolentino and Violito Payla fight as though they don't know each other.

They dress comp and obviously are friends.

They train, eat, sleep together.

But the results of their bouts in Athens tend to show they don't talk to each other.

The two—the country hopes for an EP Boxing medal in the current Olympics—form a stunning contrast.

They are as distinct as academic and valor, different as good and bad weather.

Tolentino, picked by Sports Illustrated to land a medal in Athens, lost a light contender to the EP delegation with a fierce victory in the first bout.

The first had somewhat lessened the gloom brought in by Payla's defeat against a foe he had defeated in two previous encounters.

Tolentino won because, other than his skills, he also used a lot of head.

Payla lost because, stuck with a mindless, swinging style, he fought practically blind.

BARE EYE

Ricardo Trinidad

They chase the same benefits and ordinarily are handled by responsible coaches.

Tolentino, with proper piloting, delivered grace, adjusted well when defense threatened.

He scored sharp punches and celebrated after a sensational win-up.

Payla jumped in early dug in with our first looking inward.

Very predictable and upright, he resulted like a sandwiched aircraft in the second round.

It's like this. Fighting inside the ring, reliably in the Olympics, also requires the ability to think and improvise.

Brains awards a boxer who works like a locomotive running on a single track and heading toward a single station.

Tolentino needed himself of an open sphere and shifted directions in the final round.

He jabbed out the goods from outside and connected.

Payla, despite promises of new-found sharpness from his handlers, moved in with a wild scatter shift, caught hour this case.

He became a willing target, cooked up a complete disaster.

Well, there was a view from his coach Uhel Payla, a technician themself, would be a be lighter, sharper boxer in Athens.

That never happened.

Instead, it was the comeuppance of Bakelbay Dominguez, the British flyweight. Payla had demonstrated and mastered in Boston and Palmares, who produced champions.

Presenting to wield a spoon, Payla weakly showed up with a big spoon.

Yes, well has revolution evolution to the mindless, destructions pig encoded in spoon-feeding his foe with generous scoring chances.

The handlers of the British winner did their homework.

Payla's handlers did not do theirs.

It was sickening, short of a swindle.

But we are not sure we won't be seeing Payla again at the Beijing Olympics.

Jao tries to pad lead

ROXAS, Batangas—JAO Jao of Shell Advancer leads the riders' list when the 2004 PCSO Grand Prix closes its fourth leg on Aug. 21-22 at the Batangas Racing Circuit.

Jao, sporting an unprecedented eight victory in the Expert class, leads with 123 points in the 2004 Shell Advancer Superbikes Series sanctioned by the National Motorcycle Sports and Safety Association (Nomass) and sponsored by Philippine Quality Sweepstakes Office through Ron Nomura Dunlop, Philippine Shell Petroleum Corp., Toyota Motor Philippines, Honda Yamaha, Hilton Motors and MOP Company.

Benjo Mendoza of Speedoffice, Jao's toughest rival for the season, is second overall with 93 points while Randy Ortiz follows closely with 75 in the title race of this event also supported by Hondaxtra, Standard Insurance, Maxell Architectural Paints, SIC, I.P., Bandos' Homes and Mobil.

Country	G	S	B	Total
China	32	17	14	63
United States	31	32	26	89
Japan	8	6	11	25
Australia	8	5	11	24
Russia	8	5	11	24
Germany	5	13	11	29
France	5	7	7	19
Italy	5	5	4	14

Country	G	S	B	Total
Greece	5	3	1	9
Spain	3	3	2	8
Netherlands	3	3	2	8
Norway	3	2	1	6
Romania	3	2	1	6
Cuba	3	2	0	5
Hungary	3	1	2	6
Poland	3	1	2	6

GRACE

Australia's Nicole Sanderson shows how to be stylish as well as striking on set or during a preliminary match against Greece in the women's beach volleyball competition at the Athens 2004 Olympic Games.

BUSINESS

Text us your feedback (approx. the same keystrokes as 2331 (Globe) or 2800 (Smart))

E-mail: ur_business@inquirer.com.ph
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Editor Raul G. Hercules
Assistant Editor Carrie S. Hartigan

Trade gap hits $1.2B as imports rise

Draft rules on meter deposits refund out

By Abigail L. Ho

TREASURY: Regulatory Commission has come up with the draft guidelines that will govern the refund of residential electric meter and bill deposits to consumers.

The refund is expected to cost Manila Electric Co., the country's biggest electricity distributor, some P4.2 billion.

The Magna Carta for Residential Electricity Consumers, which outlines the rights and obligations of consumers and power distributors, provides that new residential power users are no longer required to put up deposits for their electric meters. As such, those who had paid would have to be refunded, including a yearly interest obligation of 10 percent.

As of the August 7 cutoff, the residential power consumers' portfolio of their bill deposits registered to cascade's worth of interest, or consumption if they are able to complete their consecutive years of prompt payment of monthly bills.

The draft guidelines set the ground rules for the conduct of the refund and bill deposit refunds.

At present, bill deposits cannot be refunded a month after the termination of a power distribution's service. The Magna Carta, however, provides that customers can already get back their bill deposits even without having their service terminated, provided that they meet the three-year prompt payment condition.

For Meralco, residential bill deposits amount to P2.9 billion, including accrued interest.

The draft guidelines state that the refunds can be in the form of cash, check or credit to future billings.

The ERC believed that consumers need not put up deposits for their electric because the ability and demand included the cost of these equipments in their base.

The ERC, under the draft guidelines, allows the power distributor to implement the refund in 10 phases, based on when the residential customer had his electricity service activated.

(story on A2)

By Michelle V. Rosca

HIGHLIGHTS: Imports rose 7.2 percent in the first half of the year to $19.926 billion from year-ago level, which, according to the National Economic and Development Authority, was an indication that economic activity would pick up in the coming months.

The rise in imports was attributed to higher demand for equipment and raw materials. However, the drop in the fuel costs, brought about by the soaring of world oil prices, also contributed to the increase in the import bill.

The National Statistics Office yesterday reported that the high-tech fuel import bill resulted in a trade deficit of $1.204 billion which, however, was lower than the $1.344 billion recorded in the same period last year.

For June alone, imports grew by 10 percent to $3.46 billion from $2.93 billion in the same month last year. Exports during the month were lower at $3.3 billion resulting in a trade deficit of $144 million.

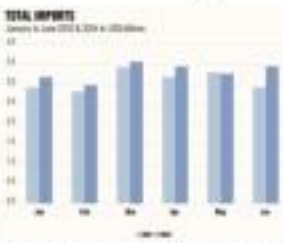
Spending on imported fuel and related materials rose 139 percent to $5.17 billion during the month from $216 million a year ago.

The electronics sector accounted for 46.4 percent of the imports in June amounting to $1.45 billion, up by 4.7 percent from year-ago level. The higher imports in June, according to Neda, showed how the decline in electronics imports last May was a signal that the sector was headed for a downturn.

Electronics imports, consisting mainly of raw materials, are used as inputs for the production of electronics products for exports. The electronics sector is the country's biggest dollar earner accounting for more than half of the country's exports.

Neda Director General General Ronaldo Mercado noted an increase in the demand for industrial equipment during the period, which means that the information and communication technology (ICT) sector would continue to expand and create more jobs.

He added, however, that the expected growth of the country's electronics exports would not be as fast as those enjoyed by its Asian neighbors.



"Technology analysts are warming up to Global's connection in global electronics, due to chronic domestic slowdowns and decent second-quarter domestic growth in Japan and the United States, Bilyk said.

But Che Boda chief said the increase in imports that was largely brought about by higher demand for finished products, such as capital goods, was encouraging as this indicated higher industrial production in the coming months. Imports of capital goods grew 7.6 percent in June.

Boda also noted that an increase in consumer demand had contributed to the higher imports in June. The NSO reported that imports of passenger cars and motorcycles, and home appliances expanded by 24.8 percent and 13 percent, respectively. Non-durable items—mainly dairy products, tea, fish, and fruits and vegetables—increased by 9.1 percent.

Japan accounted for the biggest, or 17.6 percent, of the Philippines' total import bill for the month. Imports from Japan reached $696 million. Japan was followed by the United States, which accounted for 14.8 percent share of total imports. The Philippines spent $585 million for US goods.

Currencies

$1.76 = ₱1
As of 5 p.m., Aug. 27, 2009

109.21 = ₱1
As of 5 p.m., Aug. 19, 2009

GOLD: $953.2-953.7
per ounce Hong Kong, Aug. 19, 2009

Stock Market

PSE COMPOSITE INDEX

Data from market report on Page B6

Stocks up 1.09% on bargain hunting

STOCKS prices yesterday closed 1.09 percent higher with bargain hunting seen in blue chips after sentiment was given a lift by overnight gains on Wall Street, dealers said.

Several hours with strong growth prospects also attracted interest, although reserves overnight as investors remained wary of the impact of high oil prices, dealers said.

The Philippine Stock Exchange composite index put on 61.60 points or 1.09 percent to close at 5,671.27. It moved between 5,608.27 and 5,714.06.

Volume fell to 682.2 million shares worth P432.9 million from 1.3 billion shares worth P403.20 million on Wednesday.

The all-shares index rose 11.29 points or 1.06 percent to 1,086.20. The commercial-industrial index advanced 27.20 to 2,189.84, and property gained 11.86 to 4,017.03. Mining was up 28.28 at 1,308.39 and oil up 6.86 at 1,316. Banking and financial services gained 3.43 to 693.35.

"Selective blue-chip buying prompted the market to bounce back from its session declines. Bullish investors are still weak, indicating that there's still not much interest to trade at the moment," said Joseph Pisano of Eagle Equities Inc.

Bargain-hunters were more cautious on the session's performance last night, " added Elena Pernia of Macquarie Securities Inc.

Dealers said the 10 percent year-on-year increase in remittances reports in June might have also inspired bargain-hunters.

The dollar's weakening to the session's low point of 46.80 centavos from 46.90 centavos reported were cast moderately for limited gains sold abroad.

AFP

Fighting poverty

By Brenda M. Dobbles

TWO days ago, two private sector-led discussions were held in an effort to fight poverty.

The first was a forum held in the conference room of the Asian Institute of Management (AIM), which focused on programs.

The subject was "Perceptions of Poverty in the Philippines: Government and NGO Views," a study made by AIM Professor Noel Rubento.

The second focused on COMMENTARY policy.

It was a rally held in front of the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) building. The subject was the World Trade Organization (WTO) Doha round agreement (formerly concluded on July 31) in Geneva.

The rally was led by fisherfolk leaders from the fishing bloc, Agrifish, which is a member of the Alyansa Agrikultura farmer-fisherfolk coalition.

Anti-poverty programs

During the AIM forum, various anti-poverty programs given by both the government and non-government organizations were discussed.

Among those were the provision of food, health services, housing, and livelihood opportunities. Three of the poverty models Roberto presented are identified here.

The first is the "governance and economic credit model." Some underlying assumptions are "Poverty is due to lack of good governance at the city or municipal/provincial level," and "Poverty is due to lack of economic and business opportunities."

The second is the "work ethic and spiritual value credit model." Some assumptions are "Poverty is due to the laziness of the poor," and "Poverty is due to lack of proper moral and spiritual values in the community."

The third is the "crime, drug and crime-driving credit model." Some assumptions are "Poverty is due to oppression by criminal groups," and "Poverty here is feeding more people into committing crimes."

There are still other anti-poverty models used by NGOs, government and NGO-organizers.

However, Roberto concluded, from his research that these organizations would be much more effective if they focused their efforts on adopting a primary thrust, rather than following the two main models or the combination. Put bluntly, he said, they should be concentrated by the beneficiaries as the unlevied to get cost numbers.

Roberto said, "The answer is to (and by extension) understanding the target beneficiaries instead of having them (or) take (other) poverty models."

Roberto ended his presentation with a point of it. Noting of items "It does not matter, great that we may not so much need to be understood to be understood."

During the open forum, Social Weather Stations (SWS) head Fe Makiling Mangahas suggested that this understanding to target specific and localized, rather than done on a nationwide level.

We agree with Mangahas that it is only in this way that anti-poverty programs can become truly effective.

WTO policy

It has been said that policy does more than programs in achieving change, often accounting for 70 percent of the impact. Such a long-term program is a policy environment.

The fisherfolk leaders who rallied last Aug. 18 welcome anti-poverty programs that provide food, health services, livelihood opportunities, and the like.

But they argued that if the new (WTO) package of framework is strong because they can no longer sell their fish against cheaper imported products with large subsidies, then the other anti-poverty programs can do little to stop the ever-greater poverty that will surely take place.

While no one might be up to offset trade impediments (difficulty encountered largely by Agriculture Assistant Secretary Segfredo Serrano, the fisherfolk leaders strongly objected to zero provision in the WTO framework that adversely affects them.

In an Aug. 9 statement (translated) with farmers and other stakeholders, they said: "The framework (central text) also (does) nothing to prohibit the subsidy of the developed countries, and so consequently argue about a contract to accommodating the demands of the developing countries."

They argue that the new framework gives a go-ahead for the United States and Europe to continue their subsidies to agriculture, which amount to $140-160 billion.

On the other hand, the developing countries are expected to move to negotiate binding tariffs and non-tariff reductions in textiles.

No level playing field

The does not provide for a level playing field.

For the fisheries sector, where the Philippine government pushed only marginal cuts in tariff rates in 10-15 percent without consulting the fisherfolk, the new framework forces our government to adopt tariffs cut bound rates of 20-30 percent.

Prior to this framework, we had the flexibility to adjust these rates to the level appropriate for us because we had no bound rates.

Referring to the 20-30 percent rates from which they would be further required WTO tariff reductions, the fisherfolk leaders said: "These rates cannot provide much protection to us for fear (of) drastically decreasing from us more (rates and) economic costs resource base."

They also asked that the fund in the fishery trade negotiations both for market access and fishery subsidies be transferred from the DTI to the Department of Agriculture (DA).

The DA, and not the DTI, is responsible for the country's fishery sector and takes the lead in the WTO agriculture trade negotiations.

We agree with the fisherfolk that the DA sees

MB allows banks to buy more SME receivables

By Doris C. Dumlao

THE MONETARY Board has relaxed the single borrower limit (SBL) on banks buying trade receivables from small and medium-scale enterprises.

In a circular which will take effect next week, the BSP's policy-making body said that the banks would not be subjected to additional 15-percent exposure to the trade receivables, on top of the normal SBL of 25 percent of the bank's net worth.

This is on condition, however, that the SME's receivables are due from companies with credit ratings of at least AA or equivalent from a BSP-recognized rating agency.

The BSP approves a SBL to prevent banks from exposing themselves to just one industry or borrower.

The banks could also trade receivables of the SMEs, which had become past due or called now, shall be computed as an additional loan by the bank to the SME.

In an earlier ruling, the BSP said it would exempt from the SBL the exposures arising from banks' purchases of SME receivables from top corporations.

The BSP in another new ruling to assist investment-motivated purchases to those issued by top corporations.

The **MB** ruling supports the new electronic marketplace set up by the state-owned Development Bank of the Philippines for the trading of accounts payables to SMEs.

The facility, called "Marketplace for SME Receivables Purchases" or MARPURE, MB seeks to boost the cost of financing the working capital requirements of SMEs, through a computerized marketplace.

Food and beverage giant San Miguel Corp. previously signed an agreement to facilitate the trading of its accounts payables to SMEs with the DBP.

At any given time, the SMC has about P15 billion worth of payables, mostly to SMEs.

The SM group of retail tycoon Henry Sy has committed to do the same.

The DBP has proposed a similar arrangement with other big companies, such as Nestlé Philippines, Globe, Bayan Corp., Smart Communications Inc. and Filipinas Shell Petroleum Corp.

Rio units recalled

By Bernard W. Dominga

COLUMBIAR Autocar Corp. has recalled Rio Rio units sold in the country between January 2000 and March 2004 for a defective Park Shift Rod assembly.

Columbia, the local partner of South Korean auto maker Rio Motor Corp., said the defective part of the subassembly on "might sometimes [get] stuck [on] which could lead to cracking and fuel leakage."

However, the company said in a letter to Trade Undersecretary Adrian S. Cristobal Jr. that there have been no reported cases of such problems in any of the nine countries Autocar.

Columbia said the cause was part of a worldwide recall program being conducted by Rio Motors.

But it was quick to reiterate Rio vehicles' reliability and safety.

Columbia said 329 Rio units—which were imported completely built—were sold during the period.

Cristobal said the Department of Trade and Industry would monitor the conduct of the Rio recall campaign.

In another development, the Philippine Automotive Association, pushed for the ban on at least stricter regulations on the importation of used Japanese vehicles.

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Globe to settle ₱160-M NTC fees

By Gerbren S. Bacino

[illegible] Telecom Inc. yesterday said that it had received a ₱160-million billing from the National Telecommunications Commission for supervision and regulatory fees due this year.

But Ernilo Garcia, Globe's head of regulatory affairs, pointed out that the company had no outstanding overdue balance with the NTC.

Edgardo Cabanlit, NTC director for office of the day said that Globe had unpaid dues of about P100-million, just like Smart Communications Inc.

Philippine Telephone Corp. has an overdue balance of more than P1 billion, according to the commission.

But according to Garcia, "Globe is updated in its payments of the supervision and regulatory fees."

Globe said it had received only yesterday the NTC's assessment for this year, amounting to P160,488,750.07. In accordance with the Public Service Law, the bill is due on Sept. 20 and is therefore, not yet overdue, said Garcia.

The Globe official said the company was validating the NTC's assessment.

NTC chair Ronald Solis said the commission was pressing the collection of unpaid dues from the profitable telecom companies. These carriers are also the target of the government's new revenue measures aimed at taxing their windfall profits.

Like its sister agency, the NTC remits most of its collection to the national government. Last year, the NTC delivered about ₱1.4 billion to state coffers and hoped to contribute about ₱1.4 billion in 2004.

In the first half of the year, Smart posted ₱11.0-billion, while Philippine Long Distance Telephone Corp. [illegible] Digitel Telecommunications Corp. posted ₱2.1 billion in profit during the first half.

Garcia has said the NTC had already filed an administrative case against Pilcel, which was elevated to the Quezon City court.

The NTC official said Pilcel had been using its financial losses as an excuse to justify its failure to pay.

Cabanlit explained that supervision and regulatory fees should be half of the paid-up capital. "So if you paid capital is ₱1 billion, then the supervision fees you have to pay is ₱500 million. This is pursuant to the Telecommunications Act."

Solis said the carriers must pay the fees because these are obligations to the government.

He said the fees in the NTC were separate from the taxes the telecom firms must pay the government. Just the same, Solis added, the funds go to the national treasury.

REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES
SECURITIES AND EXCHANGE COMMISSION
MANDALUYONG

IN THE MATTER OF THE
AMLA CORPORATION
(Registrant)

REGISTRATION OF SECURITIES

NOTICE

BOARD OF DIRECTORS — POSITION

CORPORATE OFFICERS AND MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE MEMBERS — POSITION

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Co-Vice Chairman of the Board/Executive Committee
President and Chief Executive Officer
Vice-Chairman of the Board/Executive Committee/Managing Director
Senior Managing Director and Chairman for the Philippines
Senior Managing Director and Corporate Secretary
Treasurer/Chief Financial Officer/Senior Managing Director
Senior Managing Director
Senior Managing Director
Senior Managing Director
Managing Director
Managing Director
Managing Director
Managing Director
Managing Director
Managing Director and Chief Information Officer
Managing Director, Regional Corporate Governance and Compliance Officer
Managing Director and Senior Financial Treasurer

Said registration statement and other pertinent documents relating thereto are open to inspection by interested parties during business hours, and copies thereof, photostatic or otherwise, may be furnished to them only at such reasonable rates as the Commission may prescribe.

Atty. Maria I. Lozada
Officer-in-Charge
Corporate & Finance Department

Banks to issue ₱5-B Ayala bonds in Q3

By Elizabeth L. Sanchez

INVESTMENT banks are hoping to offer Ayala Corp.'s ₱5 billion bonds by the end of the third quarter.

Insurers said if there is substantial demand, the company may ready for crossing the lane site.

Ayala Corp. is awaiting approval from the Securities and Exchange Commission to register its proposed ₱5 billion fixed rate bond offering to refinance existing and future debts.

Seven local and foreign banks will arrange and manage the proposed ₱5 billion peso bond offering.

Ayala Corp. also signed a ₱2.7 billion financing euro note facility agreement with a leading consortium, to be headed by Banco de Oro Universal Bank, Bank of Commerce, Equitable PCI Bank, Philippine National Bank, PBCOM and Landbank.

This short term standby facility will be re-priced quarterly, based on 3-month Libor 1 year, and provide Ayala Corp. with more flexibility to address its future liquidity and funding requirements.

In raising peso-denominated funds, Ayala Corp. hopes to shift the bulk of its borrowings to local currency.

The firm has close to P6 billion in cash and ₱240 million in unused commercial credit facilities which can cover its maturing obligations up to next year.

ASIAN FORUM
on Corporate Social Responsibility

2003 2002

Partial List of Workshop Topics

Partial List of Plenary Topics

Strategic Corporate Partners
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The largest gathering in Asia in the field of Corporate Social Responsibility

DISCLOSURES

PHILCOMSAT Holdings Corp. constituted a nominations committee with Lodi Lodin Jr. and Enrique Locsin as members.

* * *

FILSAR Ilkara and Development Corp. plans to increase its authorized capital stock from ₱400 million to ₱5.5 billion; its annual stockholders' meeting and the board on Sept. 28 with record date on Aug. 30.

* * *

ELECTED directors of **Jollibee Holdings Corp.** were Jolly Ting, Rodolfo Ong, Ramon Ong, Ernesto Tanmantiong, Ernesto Tanmantiong Jr., Arthur Ty, Artemio Panganiban, Joseph Tanbuntiong, Emmanuel Lopez, Antonio Chua, Ang Cho Sit, Antonio Chua, Henry Sy Jr., Peter Lim, Johnson Robert Go Jr., Robert Go, Ernesto Pantangco and Cheo Chai Hong.

* * *

BANK of the Philippine Islands disclosed the resignation of Antonio Lagdameo Jr. as director of the bank. Oscar Inocencio was elected to replace him. Also, a special cash dividend of ₱1 a share was declared.

* * *

LLEDIAS Bulao will retire as vice president of **Sara Mee Lakeside Hotel Philippines Inc.**

* * *

ELECTED directors of **Nestle (Philippines) Nutri Corp.** were Renato Magadia, Ramiro Ignacio Jr., Kenneth Hotchkiss, Mario Ong, Alfredo Ponsaran, Pablo Gonzalez Jr., Angel Cruz, Lucrecio Mercado Jr., Jaime Ruiz, Arthur Lopez and Philip Encarnacion. *Compiled by Marilee U. Tobias, PDP Research*

CURRENCIES

August 19, 2004 Country	Unit	Cash Equivalent	Dollar Equivalent	Peso Equivalent
Australia	Dollar	0.73554	1.39899	55.9760
Japan	Yen	0.00910	1.00616	0.0396
United Kingdom	Pound	1.87972	1.39899	75.0360
Hong Kong	Dollar	0.12885	0.06251	7.1484
Switzerland	Franc	0.83215	1.60615	44.7504
Canada	Dollar	0.72717	1.37699	55.1760
Europe	Euro	1.19417	1.60615	64.2460
Kuwait	Dinar	3.34165	10.04186	402.0120
Malaysia	Ringgit	0.26315	0.26316	10.5360
Norway	Krone	0.14000	0.17500	7.0080
Saudi Arabia	Riyal	0.26644	0.26660	10.6800
Sweden	Krona	0.13000	0.17500	7.0080
Singapore	Dollar	0.57000	1.00000	40.0200
South Korea	Won	0.00085	0.00085	0.0360
Taiwan	Dollar	0.01749	0.02500	1.0008
Thailand	Baht	0.02500	0.02500	1.0008
UAE	Dirham	0.27200	0.27200	10.8840
USA	Dollar	1.00000	1.00000	40.0200
Indonesia	Rupiah	0.00000	0.00000	0.0000
Philippines	Peso	0.02500	0.02500	1.0008
Brazil	Real	0.31000	0.31000	12.4080
Denmark	Krone	0.16000	0.16000	6.4040
India	Rupee	0.02000	0.02000	0.8004
Malaysia	Ringgit	0.26315	0.26316	10.5360
Mexico	Peso	0.09000	0.09000	3.6036
New Zealand	Dollar	0.66000	0.66000	26.4132
Norway	Krone	0.13000	0.16000	6.4040
Pakistan	Rupee	0.01700	0.01700	0.6804
Saudi Arabia	Riyal	0.26644	0.26660	10.6800
South Africa	Rand	0.15000	0.15000	6.0060
Sweden	Krona	0.13000	0.17500	7.0080
Turkey	Lira	0.00000	0.00000	0.0000
UK	Pound	1.87972	1.39899	75.0360
Venezuela	Bolivar	0.00000	0.00000	0.0000

SSS backtracks on EPCIB

EPCIB airwave legal and lobbying pressure, the Social Security System has decided to stand by auction to Equitable PCIBank stake, with original buyer Banco de Oro group having the right to match, under the so-called first-challenge rule, the highest bid.

SSS has already removed advertising space in the leading newspapers to announce the bid sales this weekend.

And, apparently, BDO has been informed of the new SSS tack. And SSS chief Tesoro Sy declined to comment when contacted.

According to the grapevine, the SSS board decided to play it safe and declined the 24-percent blue stand the supervisor opinion is revised about the BSP's final letter to the Commission on Audit.

The new bidding requirements detailed in last week's Freedom Day bid have overlooked, by the capricious change in the payment style with the impending transfer of SSS Chief Executive Abes to the investment Services Assistant System.

Abes will be replaced by Thelma Cayanan, who has been finally persuaded after initial reluctance to move over from the Philippine Nationwide Co.

PSE's new chairman coming. SSS president Corazon de la Paz has endorsed Cory "non-political" incumbent although Malacañang apparently is still trying to talk to the tough accountant to stay on.

De la Paz left Wednesday to attend an overseas conference but should be back by the weekend.

According to the grapevine, Cayanan has recommended Alfredo Ramos, currently a PSEC executive vice president, as new SSS president, should the Ramos-Yu confidant-business partner prevail with his deputation.

DBP: David's bedeviled past

DEVELOPMENT Bank of the Philippines president Reynaldo David maintains a low profile, although he has been investigated for alleged illegal foreign exchange transactions during the Marcos years, he was never ever suspended by the Central Bank.

Rumors about his checkered past began swirling again amid Malacañang's announcement that David, currently CEO of the Export and Industry Bank, has been named as replacement of Vicente Ramos.

Draft rules on meter . . .

The refund will have to be implemented from Jan. 1, 2004 to Dec. 31, 2013, with an equitable distribution to be given.

In the case of Meralco, the total unclaimed meter deposits are placed at P1.3 billion, including accrued interest.

But customers can also opt not to refund their meter deposits, in which case the amount they initially paid for that purpose will continue to earn interest.

For electric cooperatives, the refunds will come in accordance with orders of their

COCKTALES

Victor C. Agustin

David attributed the Central Bank's investigation as his being caught in the broadcasting squabble between the Commission on Audit and the government Development Bank.

He said he wanted to see Development Bank president for only 15 months until he decided to move to the Hong Kong, where he started a new professional, maybe colorful domestic career.

The new BSP president will assume office by Oct. 1.

If it is any consolation to David, two former bank presidents who had actually been fined by the Central Bank for dubious foreign exchange transaction subsequently went on to become Cabinet secretaries.

Going nuts at Polo

TWELVE are on candidates for the five board vacancies in the Aug. 30 elections of the Manila Polo Club.

Except for Jaime Ayala's slate, Daniel de Pedro, the rest are all allied with the current board.

Traditionally, the Ayalas appointed the previous board in the last two elections. Still, the rumors in Polo have it a quiet campaign is over the candidates was on-go. Guess who is considered number one?

Heard through the grapevine:

SUPREME Court Justice Dante Tinga, with the concurrence of the court's Second Division, has ordered Court of Appeals Justices Edgardo Montesa, Gonzalo Jacinto and Antonio Eugenio Jr. to state why they "abused and were derelict in the performance of their duties" when they issued, on the strength of a so-called expert, of a lower court ruling involving a forged check.

Montesa, the ponente of the dismissed ruling, has been related, within fingers reach, to the former power secretary of the Estrada administration.

(E-mail: cocktales_pdi@yahoo.com or cocktales_pdi@hotmail.com)

TONY tinted bags /C3

LIFESTYLE

Editor Chelo Banal-Fonacier

Legend of the Fall 2004 trends

Part I

FASHION may be fickle but it's not impossible to keep up with it. It can be quite fun and yes, inexpensive, if you know what to invest in or where to find reasonably priced finds.

Before starting out, find out what trends you would like to adopt for each season. This will be based partially on your lifestyle, hobby needs, budget and old stand-by clothes you'll want to keep. Then add on new trends. Vintage duds, decorated clothes and embellishments like bows, embroidery, fringes, buttons and flowers are all the rage.

Although this season's trends are not exactly for the shrinking violets, you can always modify and wear them in a subtler style. Each season features "fun" pieces that develop a body type and age appropriate way to wear these trends.

APPLES' PICKINGS

Appleta Alferez-Sandiwayan

For example, a 50-year-old woman might look over the top if she wears too much statement metallic accessories. Or a 30-year-old might look frumpy in a traditional tweed dress, classic pearls and pumps. Worse yet, someone with large cuddlings will most probably look unsightly if she wears the latest extra-slim pencil skirts. She might be better off dressing in a chic style.

Keep in mind that there's always a way to make a trend work for you. And if you find it is just overwhelming, simply give it up. It's hard to classify for yourself in your own comfortable and confident or attitude.

CONTINUED /C2

HEIRLOOMED BEAUTIES

Fall fashion is all about femininity. One surefire way to achieve this is by choosing heirlooming varieties of clothing, be it a wrap bridal cardigan or a gorgeous evening ensemble. Or why not update your pieces by tying a pretty satin ribbon around your classic suit jackets or a season's old dress? On Amanda: BCBG cardigan and Victoria Secret's sheer embroidered tank available at Rustan's; on Stephanie: Stonefield sweetheart tube top with lace ribbons, available at Rustan's; and Tyler chiffon and lace pleated skirt.

CHIC COATS
"Brushes, cardigans and jackets will bring your office attire into play this season. It's not more than will dress up any drab Monday blues outfit. So for trench coats that double as a dress, they're great for almost any body shape," says stylist and Brickhill Just Shop co-owner Alexis Epperson. On Stephanie: black belted jacket and cropped pants (Cost, $[illegible], Mint Wire Mart Leather Goods. On Amanda: Calin Footwear trench coat, Mint Wire black pin-striped flare.

VINTAGE CHIC
"Vintage dressing continues to be on a roll as more and more young designers are making their own creations appear as if they've resurrected them from a recent archive," says writer and stylist Blair Cavness. Vintage-y dresses abound in the local retail market, so you, too, can get into the trend with utmost ease. On Amanda: Vivienne Tam embroidered sweetheart tulle dress with jersey trim; on Stephanie: silver lace over an embellished pink shift, to order from Rhett Eula.

TWEED
Thanks to Karl Lagerfeld and the return of Chanel, tweeds are back and more fashionable than ever. How does one style which way—with jeans, a white tee and pearls for a modern take or with a sequined top for a more formal look. On Amanda: Calin Footwear pink tweed jacket; on Stephanie: Pat and Patty beaded top and tweed skirt with velvet ribbon; Kenneth Cole cream-black tweed heels.

Legend of the Fall 2004 trends

From page C1

To help narrow down your choices, here is a partial list of the coming year's chic, stylish fashion industry insiders:

Jenni Epperson
Creative director, Quarter Just Shop+ stylist

Metal masks—Gold, silver and bronze will make you sparkle this coming holiday season. Treat yourself with gold or silver stilettos and hope to get with your lovers—jeans, T-shirts and your LBD little black dress) will get an instant boost when accessorized with these goodies. Rush to Gianvito's newest shoe shops—Jimmy Hi, Koko and VIII—to get your shoe fix.

Hit her great wedding pad and silver evening bags that are sure to give another a run for her money. Hunter Gather in Inkwell and Marcello's for beautiful bracelets. Mingling and cuffs in glittery they will make your whole outfit sparkle!

Dior-esque—Dress hes, cardigans and jackets will bring any office attire into play this season. It's not more than will dress up any drab Monday blues outfit. Go for trench coats that double as a dress, they're great for almost any body shape. You can find stylish ones in The Black Shop, Limited and Entrepreneur in Bastian's, then cloth a ribbon on the waist (Excellent has a variety of ribbons from satin, velvet to grosgrain and tulle it by the metre) to make it chic.

Tweed or bouclé—The jacket in this material is definitely a must-buy because it's this season's pacesetter. It's best paired with dress but to add a classy appeal to it. Grab one at Tweeds, YBYS or watch out for Trinity Tones. we're delighted with it Calin Footwear.

Blair Cavness
Fashion stylist

Vintage dressing—This continues to be on a roll as more and more young designers are making their own creations appear as if they've resurrected them from a recent archive. The eternally cool Marc Jacobs showed a lot of vintage-y dresses on his runway, and so did Phoebe Philo for Chloe and Olivier Theyskens for Nina. Think of Maggie Gyllenhaal in "The Interview."

Dress shedding—If there is one thing that will leave an imprint on fashion's collective consciousness, it will be the influx of ribbons— from bow-clashed waist closures to tulle-ribbon piping to tweed accessorizers. It is also the return of the wrecked cardigan look.

Tweed—In its lighter form for our climate, tweed speaks sophistication and refinement. With Karl Lagerfeld's constant reinvention of the Chanel classic, the tweed jacket's influence is reaching a younger market.

Wardrobe— Yuri Broll's floral collection for Gucci is on all Gingerbug. He heavily organized dresses he loves across gown with navy. Lanes, sequins and beads add a bright sequins.

Cropped pants—After making a huge comeback are cropped pants, especially when paired with an old-fashioned cardigan and oxford sweater.

Rhett Eula
Designer

Here's a quick list of what to watch out for and what to wear:

Smocks:
Pencil skirts
Tweed
Gabardine looks
Tweed-like shoes
Sequinned evening clutch
Cocktail dresses
Shrugs/Bos
Lace
Conservative chic
Nude

E-mail the author at [illegible]@thestar.com

BLING BLING!
Add a bit of sparkle and shine to an otherwise boring wardrobe with the use of versatile accessories such as bags, shoes, cuffs and the like. Kate Spade "Maxine" pink and silver tote, various pink and purple totes, to order from Ciara Marangon, 09/8/9220195, or log on to www.saksoffthefifth.com

LIFESTYLE

For feedback, e-mail us at lifestyle@inquirer.com.ph

Text us your feedback: inquirer <space> name <space> city <space> message to 2207 (Globe) or 280 (Smart)

The partners behind the monochromatic Carbon experiment with color in Tint

TRISTA pebble-grain leather tote with fringe accent (P6,798 large; P4,598 small)

Bagful of colors

Text by Chesha V. Moral
Photos by Roger Carpio

JOANNA Preysler and Raul Francisco have a new baby.

While everyone was looking the other way, the couple conceived and gave birth to a new bag boutique on the ground floor of Greenbelt 3 in Makati, just a few feet away from their other baby, the now two-year-old Carbon.

The new store is called Tint, and retails bags, footwear and accessories in hues never before seen in Carbon, which sells only pieces in all gradations of black and the occasional white.

But more than the color of the merchandise, Preysler explains Tint and Carbon are distinguished by the lifestyle of their clientele, so they saw no problem in opening two bag shops adjacent to each other. A Carbon patron who's a CEO by day may also be a disco diva by night or a soccer mom on weekends. "She can't possibly use the same bag for all her activities."

Carbon is urban and edgy, Preysler adds, while, "Tint is more resort, more 'girly-girly.' While the former has men's line, Tint sells only items for women but also has a sprinkling of black-and-white pieces. "If Carbon is Corazone National, Tint is Marc Jacobs," she says.

The idea for Tint was borne out of Carbon clients who would always inquire if they also had colored bags. "Carbon is a strong and solid concept, so we didn't want to dilute it by including colored items in the store," Preysler explains. "If you know Raul, he's very firm about his ideas." Carbon, in fact, was awarded Store of the Year for 2005 by the Ayala Malls.

When the inquiries became incessant, they started keeping a "secret stash" of colored bags in Carbon, just to test the market. "They always sold out! That's when we realized there's a market niche that we haven't addressed."

They were offered a space on the second level of Greenbelt 4 for Tint, but they felt the area is more a transit point for commuters and not where their A-B market would go to shop. They opted to take the available space in Greenbelt 3.

Success

Fortunately for the owners, launching Tint had none of the attendant labor pains:

TIM! owner Joanna Prueher with her Kanvi bags (P5,990 each)

WILMA bag (P2,390) and Mindy pony-hair flange in cream (P2,490)

JEMMA bag (P2,336) and Madison walking shoes (P2,390)

Bagful of colors

From page C1

its first month was a success, just as they had hoped—with an significant effect on Carlton's sales.

Of course, they're not being complacent. Retail is a very tricky business, says Preyaler. "You always have to evolve with your clients." This early, they're already looking at its supplement bag. Both all leather lines with items using other materials.

"I'm a fit woman who love fashion, appreciate design and workmanship but don't want to break the bank," she explains. "I'm a item myself, so I am conscientious about how I spend."

Tim is their answer to high-priced designer accessories labels—just as fashion-forward but mid-priced.

Stocks are kept to a minimum to lend the brand an element of exclusivity. Initially, Francisco and Preyaler believe in maintaining flagship outlets, so opening another Tim store is not on the table at present. "It's a niche market, so if we branch out now, we would end up saturating our own market," Preyaler explains.

The Tim store bears the name art gallery Bertal Carlton, where products are showcased and spotlighted like artworks themselves. It is no accident that the new shop also has framed artworks on display as the owner also promotes Filipino artists. Featured are independent artists and those affiliated with The Drawing Room.

As they prepare for Tim's official opening on Aug. 28, Preyaler says they're also introducing two imaginary characters, Jenna and Jewel, to displays fashion tips in their online site or fashion diarities patrons. Jenna is the store will have patrons on, say, how to wear an orange-colored bag—Scots Ann, a bowl-headed dressmaker girl, and Jewel, her carefree sister from uptown.

Soon, the store will also carry hand-made jewelry made by Preyaler and a US-based friend.

JAMAR suede bag with patchwork design (P4,290) and Mindy tube-print pony-hair thongs (P2,490)

TIM! bags with assorted pipe handles (P4,290 large; P4,990 small)

HAMLA suede driving shoes with pony-hair upper (P2,290)

TIM!, the chic store boutique of urban-edge Carlton in Greenbelt 3, has the look and feel of an art gallery; where bags and footwear are showcased with artworks from The Drawing Room.

MONIQUE pony-hair flat mules (P1,290 each)

TRACI "spectator" bags (P3,990 each)

SOFT and conventional elements are combined in this strapless empire-style chiffon mini dress accented with beads and strips of ribbon at the chest

PLEATED edges and emphasis on the chest are among the current trends captured in this draped and strapless chiffon number in magenta

Are Miguel Leyva and Francis Libiran the Dolce & Gabbana of local fashion?

DUPIONI silk halter dress in gray with blue-violet accent is a perfect alternative to the cute little black dress.

Two to tango

Text by Alex Y. Vergara
Photos by Robert Perez

MIGUEL Leyva has a good grasp of zero to say for every customer Francis Libiran.

Even during this photo shoot, Leyva is in his element as he single-handedly coaxes the three models to strike various poses. Libiran is content to observe his opposite number at the sandwich-manning task.

Such differences in their personalities, however, don't make for a lopsided working relationship.

As the designing duo behind Stitch, they are so in their every item that comes out of their studio—from men's RTW styles to women's haute couture gowns—has their stamp of approval.

"We put our ideas together," says Leyva. "I have more of the Japanese feel, while Francis leans more toward French and Filipino."

He says he properties complements Libiran's flair for details and embellishment. "When the two put their respective strengths together, there's this extraordinary synergy," says Leyva, that makes the clothes work.

Even during the few times Libiran makes an outlier addition by himself, Leyva's touch invariably surfaces in the clothes. That's how we'll the two partners know each other.

In a business where honest-to-goodness criticism is scarce, their collaboration not only helps shape their creativity, but also keeps them grounded. The client, of course will be the last to know, as the two prefer to keep their creative differences behind the shop's four walls.

"But we seldom argue," Libiran says. "We can count the number of times we did."

And if ever they do, says Leyva, it's because they want the best for the client. Such diligence has kept it on as Stitch now counts the likes of Alessandra de Rossi, Karina Bautista, Christine Reyes, Shalimar Catane, Isa Seguerra and Gary Valenciano among its growing list of celebrity clients.

Stitch's RTW chairs are exclusively sold at Inc. Inc. boutique, where Leyva says his and Inc. have been the ideal Stitch by Miguel Francisco.

They assumed the new name recently upon the advice of American stylist Phillip Stitch, who saw their clothes during last year's Mercedes Benz Fashion Week in New York.

It's not a fashion and Budget Stitches can get away with is without compromising their core identities, says Stitch, as she puts. The name also has a Latin ring to it, it is Another Cubao American designer likewise Rodriguez.

Lots in common

If not for their ability to "give and take" and second-guess each other's preferences, they say, they wouldn't have lasted this long. It has been six years since the friends-looking pair with incredibly near-brilliant at a point and found out that they had lots in common, including a passion for clothes.

Libiran was then a practicing architect, while Leyva was an assistant producer and talent manager for ABS-CBN and Viva Films. They decided to drop everything and open a small clothes shop at 128 Street Bernardo II... now Tomas Morato Ave., Quezon City

OLIVE-GREEN satin gown comes with a Persian medallion and a pair of accessories that add drama and versatility to such a simple creation

DUCHESS satin jacket with mandarin collar gets a youthful twist, thanks to its tapered fit and a pair of satin strips on the side.

VINTAGE look goes an ombre-hued bustier dress with a cinched bust line and draped collar accent.

SHEEN and the industrialchick are big at Stitch. Just capture a sheer-tie satin shirt and black pants. Or dress a strapless lime-green draped silk dress with Japanese-inscribed corset.

FOR AUG. 27/27/28, 42/49/49 and 52/53/49/51.

"There were rockers at along Tomas Morato," Leyva recalls. "A few people would come in and buy our one-of-a-kind shirts that were patterned after our bodies."

They christened their joint venture Stitch, a fourth-sounding name that Leyva says doesn't mean anything, and promptly went on to specialize in men's RTW and made-to-order clothes. Stitch quickly gained a following among Manila's entertainment, and before long, young women also began knocking at their door.

Their first venture into the female realm was a year after, when they did the gowns of three teenagers attending a debut. As the oldtimers then let men's and women's clothes had certain similarities, the pair managed the transition without difficulty.

"We found men's clothes a bit limiting," says Libiran. "We wanted to grow and take our creativity to the limits."

There was no turning back since demand for their services steadily grew over the years. The duo's creations are now standard fixtures during awards nights and seen and public affairs of fashionistas, while its humor customer base has five-figure owners.

What will be in store for Stitch's fans? The pair is interesting the company's managers and supervisors into further understanding the concepts behind the label. The move is necessary as Stitch prepares to beef up its wedding and merchandising lines.

"Our dream is to one day become a lifestyle brand," says Leyva. "Going into confections or shoes, bags, furniture and home accessories will require a great deal of money and hard work, but it can be done."

Libiran makes it clear, as if to express his heartfelt agreement with his partner's grand plans. Whatever direction they take in the future, it will most likely be a joint venture requiring both their vision and talents.

EVENING glamour is flowing and shapeless, as seen in this empire-cut orange and fuchsia chiffon gown with cowled detail on the chest.

FRANCIS Libiran and Miguel Leyva, a.k.a. Miguel Francisco

Bobby, Bobby, Bobby

SOCIETY women guests donned their finest jewelry and most brand-name clothes for the Sunday's Thanksgiving dinner party that popular couturier Bobby Nemenzo hosted at his posh residence in Plaza Palermo for his "soul clean Mondé" and family.

At the long line of invitees entered the mansion, one couldn't help but notice talented Bistro Pastor's outstanding job, of lavishing it on different all over lobby's drapes, monumental entry and rainforest garden, palengke. There were votive candles flickering all over illuminating the huge house, together with garden spotlights designed by renowned and good-looking architect Conrad Onglao.

For dinner, the popular Via Mare served a yummy buffet of four-star dishes, complemented by Veltmor fares, also cooked Bobby's favorite dishes.

"Eh, I thought it was going to be Noah's carnation," said Sheryl Lesmoir, one of Mondé's top hostesses, in the sit-to-the buffet.

While the band of Noel Lopez provided entertainment, at one table the big topic was the jewelry of some of the stunning women and host architect Conrad Onglao designed. Bobby's house and the awe-inspiring dress, also by Conrad, on the moment seems the most find homage to Bobby and Bangchoknemesa.

An exuberant Cris of sparkling gem and attire, both white and red Dress as he'll be celebrator's super gal, the vivacious Ayala-based presenting rattlesnake Rochelle Ebidi, was poised like mannequin on all the bedecorated at 2 a.m., palengke. Their party favors of hand-embroidered linen hand towels bedside Sonal Mehtani were given out by Bobby to his guests.

Newest taberna

Ma could never say no to delectable Spanish cuisine. I'm sure it must be because of the mouthwatering tapas, aficionados. Thank goodness we don't have a lack of this type of cooking in Cebu-Manila, and as my real gourmand knows, the popular Casa Sanza has always been known for its delectable dishes...from the succulent paella, to their tapas and the specialty of the house, the to-die-for Pancetta Tiramisu cheesecake, which I have to order each day in advance.

Casa Sanza was born in Makati, and before you could list an epithet, they doubled branches in Greenhill, The Fort and Ayala.

Now Cebu can rest both to Tabernas de Casa Sanza, which is at the newly developed Ayala Center. The new branch prides itself on being the best place to get a yummy lunch. And after work, when chilling it, then Hola Bar Lo is Tapas Time! Or something of such format is, in P200, you get five chilled beers and a tapa of your choice.

Ah, was invited when Taberna de Casa Sanza officially opened its doors with glam Imelda Marcos (who hovered in with her pal, Club Filipino president Butch Antonio), Señor Jose Miguel Cortes, who is the economic and commercial counselor of the Spanish Embassy, Casa Sanza owners, stay reporter Anne and Ghanty Antuan, and the lady in front of the house, well respected Taberna's president Joanna Lim.

Be a while Chavit Gil like I was at Old Madrid, having one and tapa before a hotter dinner. Huddle to the dinner. Is the opening. I spied for tonight, the dress that stops up on you and then keeps You're so right on me.

Hey, you who was there? There were Bernard's Kennedy, get- Rhoda Compound, Toni Abad, with his good-looking husband Charles gorgeous Irish Hennessy, socialites Bryan Ian of Brioli, Mercedes Perez, Rina Ortiz, Rita Gil, Richie Ortigas, Kitty and Alana Gaisano Jr., Chay Ty, Gino Mejia of ING, Gin de la Rosa, Ian Lopez and Mike Mendoza of Dentsu Philippines, Bernard Bergson of Asia Capital, Cecil Lynnsmith, Mitzie de Leon, Peachy Lagman, Joy Manlapaz of Philippine Spirits, John Ilagan, Jr. of ABS-CBN, Shirley and Daisy Angeles Rivera, and the lovely beautiful, good-looking group of Rianne Valentin, Nenette Huerta, Lalay Mendiola and Irene Sanchez, Dominic Jimenez Ent. and Ivell Pujol Lucbangco, Charisse and Carla Ilarigbak, plus other nice ones to mention, darlings.

Taberna de Casa Sanza is located on the second floor of the Paseo Center. Pour de Rosas, to must-to-me Dolce Hotel, Makati City. We're in comfortable hands!

Great takeoff

Corporate Air added to its fleet of planes a sleek, brand new Grand Caravan Cessna, palengke.

A champagne blessing was held at its hangar in Pasay City.

"We are proud to be the only operator in the commuter industry that offers first class service to our clients with our brand Cessna Grand Caravan according to popular destination such as Boracay, Mactan, El Nido, Club Med Subic and the Rajah Country Club."

Jim exhibit at the affair were the brainchildren of Corporate Air—their Alfredo Lim, president Marissa Ombrosa and sales and marketing director Art Alejandrino. Being the oldest shipping were Melvin Lim and Trustee Secretary Roberto Pagdanganan.

Touring the new aircraft were former President Fidel V. Ramos, Mrs. general manager Ed Miranda, PNP Deputy for operations Maj. Gen. Avelino Razon, Regan Country Club president Jose Aguinik, Philippine Coast Guard Capt. Lino Dalit, MARS-Manila/Cainta Manila Domestic Airport's worldwide manager, Alvin Guadalupe, city jail turned beach resident, our palengke, Perdita Tantoc of Boracay's popular Mandarin Spot, Mod and Most president Jonas del Rosario, Jose Ramos and Lito O. Cruz.

What solved about the plane's safety and reliability, Corporate Air sales and marketing director Art Alejandrino said, "The aircraft landed just two days ago from the Cessna factory in Wichita, Kansas after flying a total of 77 hours, 30 hours of which were flown over the Pacific Ocean, small dome enclosure and at night-time. It was flown in by Capt. Mike Boyd. Need I say more?"

No, sir, we believe you.

"The aircraft comfortably sits 12 passengers and is equipped with the most entertainment, internet, luxurious leather seats, individual lighting, and air-conditioning controls. It has large windows, making it ideal for sightseeing while flying," said Corporate Air chair Alberto Lina.

Talking about sceptics, I remember a long time ago that the law of height and, whenever I flew, I would pray that the pilot would stay on the runway as long as possible, would you believe? Remember, the only four I hate of flying, palengke, is the seat side from blanket to the airport.

3. Philamcare Harvey Perezcal with vice-chairman Joji Obieta-ong and exec. V. Taberna president Loreto Lim, Casa Roman founder Jesus Arroyo, buddy Marcos and Taberna GM Lorraine Lim-Ayala

1. THE CELEBRATOR. Bobby Nemenzo, with architect Gerry Cuaresma, Sam and Vivian Dominguez and special guests from Los Angeles, Filipina vocalists Estrella Garcia and Marc Mercurio; 2. Alice Dixson; Malandis Nemenzo with her sister Cristina Benavente Elorriaga; 3. Margie Bel Korek and Mona Lesmoir; 4. Nikki, Celine and Katie Nemenzo; 5. Checky Sandejas, girlfriend Cris Cosio; Pinti Africa, Tessie Liburd, Helen Ong and Pertina Ledesma; 6. Margie Benavente-Van Tonder; and her wife, Jessie; 7. Dr. Rhoda Chiong with husband, Makati Mayor Jejomar Binay; former Quezon City Mayor Mel Mathay and receiving their invitation/door designer Chan Frondoso; 8. Socialites Nenzy Tandoveng and Vista Cruz; 9. Concepcion Industries' Rosa Angeles; Cinderella's Theresa Carmel Eastes and popular architect Conrad Onglao; 10. Super pair, Sherry Ann Lee in Tuscon, wearing custom-made Filipiniana and stunning gorgeous Carol Garcia, back from her trip to Paris; 11. Gina Salinas and Josie Tambunting; 12. Ambassador's wife Lotz Syquia and ex-husband, Mike Jacinto; 13. Beautiful couple—ex-anchor Lilibeth Romero and mega-actor Eddie Garcia

SONY Ericsson SM Dennis Manzano, assistant manager Clarice Dito and marketing manager Patrick Lorenzo